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CLYTEMNESTRA.

AND

POEMS LYRICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE.

BY

OWEN MEREDITH.

NEW EDITION.

LONDON :
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THE AUTHOR OF THESE BOYISH VERSES WOULD NOT NOW
PRESUME TO DEDICATE THEM TO

THE HISTORIAN OF

THE GRAND REMONSTRANCE AND ARREST
OF ELIOT AND THE STATESMEN OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

IF THE GREATER PART OF THEM HAD NOT, WHEN FIRST PUBLISHED,
BEEN ALREADY IN TOKEN OF A LIFE'S AFFECTION AND GRATITUDE
INSCRIBED WITH THE HONOURED NAME OF

JOHN FORSTER.

P R E F A C E.

NEARLY all the verses here collected have already been before the public, in two volumes; one of which, entitled "Clytemnestra, and other Poems," was published in 1855, and has long been out of print; the other, entitled "The Wanderer," in 1857.

In revising these verses, I have been careful to correct them rather as little, than as much, as possible. Not because I am either indifferent to the imperfection of them, or without reverence for the public to whose notice they are now again submitted; but because I believe that, in literature, new constructions are better than reconstructions, and think that one work can only be adequately corrected by another work. A man should be altogether in his work while he is about it, and altogether out of his work, and beyond his work, when he has done it. He that is honestly labouring to improve *himself* can scarcely, I think, be too sparing of retrospective labour spent in the improvement of any piece of his previous workmanship that has already left the workshop. For on such workmanship the whole man ought no longer to be engaged. Let him try to better what he is: he cannot better what he has been. A writer ill employs the careful penmanship of later years in the interpolation of any

record of his earlier personality to which the signature of his youth has been publicly subscribed. He is like a man trying to forge his own handwriting. Early verses especially,—are they not a sort of early love-letters? Youth's first wooings of life and nature? Years after they were written they cannot be scratched, scraped, and trimmed, without being falsified. Whatever may be the defects of them, they are best left as they are, with even the blots of haste upon them. New experience demands new utterance; new passion new expression.

These verses, then, though reprinted, have not been re-written. All previously published verse which could not be sufficiently corrected without being new-cast is now withdrawn from print; and for this reason only a few of the verses published in 1857 reappear in the present collection. Such alteration as will be found in those that are retained has been made with no other view than to give increased accuracy to their expression of what they were first meant to express. In this view, I have altogether altered the rhythm of one short poem, and have slightly altered the wording of some others. I have changed the essential character of none.

It is possible that castigation far more rigorous than that to which I have felt myself at liberty to subject these verses, would not have expelled from the character of them all the vices of immature composition. Of such vices the worst is repetition of what has been said before by other writers. This, however, is the defect with which I have been chiefly careful to deal in selecting from previous publica-

tions materials for the present collection; and, if little has been altered, very much has been discarded.

Another consideration has guided, and greatly restricted, the selection of those verses now reprinted from the volume published in 1857.

It has been well said that, if poetry be the universal history of man's heart, lyric poetry is the daily journal of it. Lyric poetry chronicles the ever-varying temperature of the emotions; the hopes of the morning, the lassitude of noon, the reveries of eve; and the lyric poet is the comrade of the follies and the weaknesses, the hopes and fears, of daily life. Thoughts can be stored, and coördinated, for the tardy utterance of discreet deliberation; but emotions are a luxury which must be consumed in its freshness. The purely emotional song of a lyric poet, therefore, will alternate in tone with a rapidity proportioned to the sensitiveness with which his harp responds to the varying pressure of the human pulse upon its strings. Sustained serenity of sentiment, inflexible uniformity of tone, are the last things that should be exacted from such a poet. And such a poet, whose songs are echoes of the beatings of his heart, cannot in after years improve the expression of his past emotions; because he cannot increase the sincerity of it. But he may, at least, in the arrangement of a selection like the present, improve, by the absence of what he rejects, the collective effect of what he retains. Many of the poems published in 1857 represent the feverish dictation of a somewhat hectic muse. An unhealthy tone of feeling is not,

indeed, the worst defect of a writer. Some of the world's best literature attests this fact : and health, though an excellent thing, is not the best of all things ; for a sick man will ever remain a nobler being than a perfectly healthy poodle. But, in making up the contents of this volume, it has been my endeavour to mitigate as much as possible the unquiet effect of those restless alternations of sentiment which are not here sanctioned by the spontaneity of a first utterance. Much that was earnest in intention has been discarded with much that was flippant in expression. And, in addition to verses which, for the reasons already stated, are withdrawn from print, many have also been suppressed for no other reason than that their juxtaposition would now involve more frequent and abrupt transitions from the expression of one state of mind to that of another than is reconcilable with the attempt here made to give somewhat of congruity to the contents, and unity to the general character, of a collection of verse not freshly written.

This volume, however, remains the *bonâ fide* utterance of the writer's youth, and is in no wise the product of his present personality. Although some of its contents are now for the first time printed, yet all of them were written many years ago,—at an early age. The imitative character of the "Lines" printed immediately after Clytemnestra is of course intentional.



OWEN MEREDITH.

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CLYTEMNESTRA.

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CLYTEMNESTRA.

VOL. I.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

AGAMEMNON.

ÆGISTHUS.

ORESTES.

PHOCIAN.

HERALD.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

ELECTRA.

CASSANDRA.

CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

SCENE.—*Before the Palace of Agamemnon in Argos. Trophies, amongst which, the shield of Agamemnon, on the wall.*

Time, Morning. The action continues till Sunset.

I. CLYTEMNESTRA.

Clytemnestra. MORNING at last! at last the lingering day

Creeps o'er the dewy side of yon dark world.
O dawning light already on the hills!
O universal earth, and air, and thou,
First freshness of the east, which art a breath
Breathed from the rapture of the gods, who bless
Almost all other prayers on earth but mine!
Wherefore to me is solacing sleep denied?
And honourable rest, the right of all?
So that no medicine of the slumbrous shell,
Brimm'd with divinest draughts of melody,
Nor silence under dreamful canopies,
Nor purple cushions of the lofty couch,
May lull this fever for a little while.
Wherefore to me—to me, of all mankind,
This retribution for a deed undone?
For many men outlive their sum of crimes,

And eat, and drink, and lift up thankful hands,
And take their rest securely in the dark.
Am I not innocent—or more than these?
There is no blot of murder on my brow,
Nor any taint of blood upon my robe.
—It is the thought! it is the thought! . . . and men
Judge us by acts! . . . as though one thunder-clap
Let all Olympus out. Unquiet heart,
Ill fares it with thee since, ten sad years past,
In one wild hour of unacquainted joy
Thou didst set wide thy lonely bridal doors
For a forbidden guest to enter in!
Last night, methought pale Helen, with a frown,
Swept by me, murmuring, “I—such as thou—
A Queen in Greece—weak-hearted (woe is me!)
Allured by love—did, in an evil hour,
Fall off from duty. Sorrow came. Beware!”
And then, in sleep, there pass’d a baleful band—
The ghosts of all the slaughter’d under Troy,
From this side Styx, who cried, “For such a crime
We fell from our fair palaces on earth,
And wander, starless, here. For such a crime
A thousand ships were launch’d, and tumbled down
The topless towers of Ilion, though they rose
To magic music, in the time of gods!”
With such fierce thoughts for evermore at war,
Vext, not alone by hankering wild regrets,
But fears, yet worse, of that which soon must come,
My heart waits arm’d, and from the citadel
Of its high sorrow, sees far off dark shapes,
And hears the footsteps of Necessity
Tread near, and nearer, hand in hand with Woe.

Last night, the flaming Herald warning urged
Up all the hills—small time to pause and plan!
Counsel is weak : and much remains to do,
That Agamemnon, and, if else remain
Of that enduring band who sail'd for Troy
Ten years ago (and some sail'd Lethe-ward),
Find us not unprepared for their return.

But—hark ! I hear the tread of nimble feet
That sound this way. The rising town is pour'd
About the festive altars of the gods,
And from the heart of the great Agora,
Lets out its gladness for this last night's news.
—Ah, so it is ! Insidious, sly Report,
Sounding oblique, like Loxian oracles,
Tells double-tongued (and with the self-same voice !)
To some new gladness, new despair to some.

II. CHORUS AND CLYTEMNESTRA.

Chorus. O dearest Lady, daughter of Tyndarus !
With purple flowers we come, and offerings—
Oil, and wine ; and cakes of honey,
Soothing, unadulterate ; tapestries
Woven by white Argive maidens,
God-descended (woven only
For the homeward feet of heroes)
To celebrate this glad intelligence
Which last night the fiery courier
Brought us, posting up from Ilion,
Wheel'd above the dusky circle
Of the hills from lighted Ida.

For now (Troy lying extinguish'd,
Underneath a mighty Woe)
Our King and chief of men,
Agamemnon, returning
(And with him the hope of Argos)
Shall worship at the Tutelary Altars
Of their dear native land :
In the Fane of ancient Herè,
Or the glorious Lycian God ;
Immortally crown'd with reverend honour !
But tell us wherefore, O godlike woman,
Having a lofty trouble in your eye,
You walk alone with loosen'd tresses ?

Clytemnestra. Shall the ship toss, and yet the
helm not heave ?

Shall they drowse sitting at the lower oars,
When those that hold the middle benches wake ?
He that is yet sole eye of all our state
Shining not here, shall ours be shut in dreams ?
But haply you (thrice happy !) prove not this,
The curse of Queens, and worse than widow'd wives—
To wake, and hear, all night, the wandering gnat
Sing through the silent chambers, while Alarm,
In place of Slumber, by the haunted couch
Stands sentinel ; or when from coast to coast
Wails the night-wandering wind, or when o'er heaven
Boötes hath unleash'd his fiery hounds,
And Night her glittering camps hath set, and lit
Her watch-fires through the silence of the skies,
—To count ill chances in the dark, and feel
Deserted pillows wet with tears, not kisses,
Where kisses once fell.

But now Expectation
Stirs up such restless motions of the blood
As suffer not my lids to harbour sleep.
Wherefore, O beloved companions,
I wake betimes, and wander up and down,
Looking toward the distant hill-tops,
From whence shall issue fair fulfilment
Of all our ten-years' hoping. For, behold!
Troy being captived, we shall see once more
Those whom we loved in days of old.
Yet some will come not from the Phrygian shore,
But there lie weltering to the surf and wind ;
Exiled from day, in darkness blind,
Or having crost unhappy Styx :
And some who left us full of vigorous youth
Shall greet us now gray-headed men.
But if our eyes behold again
Our long-expected chief, in truth,
Fortune for us hath thrown the Treble Six.

Chorus. By us, indeed, these things are also wish'd.
Wherefore, if now to this great son of Atreus
(Having survived the woeful walls of Troy),
With us, once more, the gods permit to stand
A glad man by the pillars of his hearth,
Let his dear life henceforth be such wherein
The Third Libation often shall be pour'd.

Clytemnestra. And let his place be number'd with
the gods,
Who overlook the world's eternal walls,
Out of all reach of sad calamities.

Chorus. It is not well, I think, that men should set
Too near the gods any of mortal kind :

But brave men are as gods upon the earth.

Clytemnestra. And whom death daunts not, these
are truly brave.

Chorus. But more than all I reckon that man blest
Who, having sought death nobly, finds it not.

Clytemnestra. Except he find it where he does not
seek.

Chorus. You speak in riddles.

Clytemnestra. For so Wisdom speaks.

But now do you with garlands wreathe the altars,
And pour libations large, sweet spices burning ;
While I, within, the House prepare.
That so our King, at his returning,
With his golden Armament,
Find us not unaware
Of the god-given event.

Chorus. Soon shall we see the faces that we loved ;
Brother once more clasping brother,
As in the unforgotten days :
And heroes, meeting one another
(Men by glorious toils approved)
Where once they roved,
Shall rove again the old familiar ways.
And they that from the distance come
Shall feed their hearts with tales of home ;
And tell the famous story of the war,
Rumour'd sometime from afar.
Now shall these again behold
The ancient Argos ; and the grove
Long since trod
By the frenzied child of Inachus ;
And the Forum, famed of old,
Of the wolf-destroying God ;

And the opulent Mycænæ,
Home of the Pelopidæ ;
While they rove with those they love,
Holding pleasant talk with us.
O how gloriously they went,
That avenging Armament !
As though Olympus in her womb
No longer did entomb
The greatness of a bygone world—
Gods and godlike men—
But cast them forth again
To frighten Troy : such storm was hurl'd
On her devoted towers
By the retributive Deity,
Whosoe'er he be
Of the Immortal Powers—
Or mad'ning Pan, if he chastise
His Shepherd's Phrygian treacheries ;
Or vengeful Loxias ; or Zeus,
Anger'd for the shame and abuse
Of a great man's hospitality.

As wide as is Olympus' span
Is the power of the high gods ;
Who, in their golden blest abodes
See all things, looking from the sky ;
And Heaven is hard to pacify
For the wickedness of man.
My heart is fill'd with vague forebodings,
And oppress'd by unknown terrors,
Lest, in the light of so much gladness,
Rise the shadow of ancient wrong.

O Dæmon of the double lineage
 Of Tantalus, and the Pleisthenidæ,
 Inexorable in thy mood,
 On the venerable threshold
 Of the ancient House of Pelops
 Surely is enough of blood !
 Wherefore doth my heart misgive me ?
 Wherefore comes this doubt to grieve me ?
 O, may no Divine Envy
 Follow home the Argive army,
 Being vexed for things ill-done
 In wilful pride of stubborn war,
 Long since, in the distant lands !
 May no Immortal Wrath pursue
 Our dear King, the Light of Argos,
 For the unhappy sacrifice
 Of a daughter ; working evil
 In the dark heart of a woman ;
 Or some household treachery,
 And a curse from kindred hands !

III. CLYTEMNESTRA.

Clytemnestra (re-entering from the house). To-mor-
 row . . ay, what if to-day ? . . Well—then ?
 Why, if those tongues of flame, with which last night
 The land was eloquent, spoke certain truth,
 By this perchance through green Saronic rocks
 Those black ships glide . . . perchance . . . well, what's
 to fear ?

'Twere well to dare the worst—to know the end—
 Die soon, or live secure. What's left to add

To years of nights like those which I have known ?
Shall I shrink now to meet one little hour
Which I have dared to contemplate for years ?
By all the gods, not so ! The end crowns all,
Which if we fail to seize, that's also lost
Which went before : as who would lead a host
Through desolate dry places, yet return
In sight of kingdoms, when the Gods are roused
To mark the issue ? . . . And yet, yet—

I think

Three nights ago there must have been sea-storms.
The wind was wild among the Palace towers :
Far off upon the hideous Element
I know it huddled up the petulant waves,
Whose shapeless and bewildering precipices
Led to the belly of Orcus . . . oh, to slip
Into dark Lethe from a dizzy plank,
When even the gods are reeling on the poop !
To drown at night, and have no sepulchre !—
That were too horrible ! . . . yet it may be
Some easy chance, that comes with little pain,
Might rid me of the haunting of those eyes,
And these wild thoughts . . . To know he roved among
His old companions in the Happy Fields,
And ranged with heroes—I still innocent !
Sleep would be natural then.

Yet will the old time

Never return ! never those peaceful hours !
Never that careless heart ! and nevermore,
Ah, nevermore that laughter without pain !
But I, that languish for repose, must fly it,
Nor, save in daring, doing, taste of rest.

Oh to have lost all these ! To have barter'd calm,
 And all the irrevocable wealth of youth,
 And gain'd . . . what ? But this change had surely come,
 Even were all things other than they are.
 I blame myself o'ermuch, who should blame time,
 And life's inevitable loss, and fate,
 And days grown lovelier in the retrospect.
 We change : wherefore look back ? The path to safety
 Lies forward . . . forward ever.

[In passing toward the house she recognizes the shield of Agamemnon, and pauses before it.]

Ha ! old shield,
 Hide up for shame that honest face of thine.
 Stare not so bluntly at us . . . Gods, this man !
 Why sticks the thought of him so in my heart ?
 If I had loved him once—if for one hour—
 Then were there treason in this falling off.
 But never did I feel this wretched heart
 Until it leap'd beneath Ægisthus' eyes.
 Who could have so forecounted all from first ?
 From that flusht moment when his hand in mine
 Rested a thought too long, a touch too kind,
 To leave its pulse unwarm'd . . . but I remember
 I dream'd sweet dreams that night, and slept till dawn,
 And woke with flutterings of a happy thought,
 And felt, not worse, but better . . . and now . . . now ?
 When first a strange and novel tenderness
 Quiver'd in these salt eyes, had one said then
 " A bead of dew may drag a deluge down : "—
 In that first pensive pause, through which I watch'd
 Unwonted sadness on Ægisthus' brows,
 Had some one whisper'd, " Ay, the summer-cloud

Comes first : the tempest follows."—

Well, what's past
Is past. Perchance the worst's to follow yet.
How thou art hack'd and hewn and bruised, old shield!
Was the whole edge of the war against one man?
But one thrust more upon this dexter ridge
Had quite cut through the double inmost hide.
He must have stood to it well! Ay, he was cast
I' the mould of Titans : a magnificent man,
With head and shoulders like a god's. He seem'd
Too brimful of this merry vigorous life
To spill it all out at one stab o' the sword.
Yet that had help'd much ill . . . Our fears are fates
That make us cowards or else culprits all!
Ah, had some Trojan weapon . . . Fool! fool! fool!
Surely sometimes the unseen Eumenides
Do prompt our musing moods with wicked hints,
And lash us for our crimes ere we commit them.
Here, round this silver boss, he cut my name,
Once—long ago : he cut it as he lay
Tired out with brawling pastimes—prone—his limbs
At length diffused—his head droopt in my lap—
His spear flung by : Electra by the hearth
Sat with the young Orestes on her knee ;
While he, with an old broken sword, hack'd out
These crooked characters, and laugh'd to see
(Sprawl'd from the unused strength of his large hands)
The marks make CLYTEMNESTRA.

How he laugh'd !
Ægisthus' hands are smaller.

Yet I know
That matrons envied me my husband's strength.

And I remember when he strode among
 The Argive crowd he topp'd them by a head,
 And tall men stood wide-eyed to look at him,
 Where his great plumes went tossing up and down
 The brazen prores drawn out upon the sand.
 War on his front was graved, as on thy disc,
 Shield! which he left to keep his memory
 Grand in men's mouths : that some revered old man,
 Winning to this the eyes of our hot youth,
 Might say, "'Twas here, and here—this dint and that—
 On such and such a field (which we remember)
 That Agamemnon, in the great old time,
 Held up the battle."

Now lie there, and rust!

Thy uses all have end. Thy master's home
 Should harbour none but friends.

O triple brass,
 Iron, and oak ! the blows of blundering men
 Clang idly on you : what fool's strength is yours !
 For, surely, not the adamantine tunic
 Of Ares, nor whole shells of blazing plates,
 Nor ashen spear, nor all the cumbrous coil
 Of seven bulls' hides, may guard the strongest king
 From one defenceless woman's quiet hate.

What noise was that ? Where can Ægisthus be ?
 Ægisthus !—my Ægisthus ! . . . There again !
 Louder, and longer—from the Agora—
 A mighty shout : and now I see i' the air
 A rolling dust the wind blows near. Ægisthus !
 O much I fear . . . this wild-will'd race of ours
 Doth ever, like a young unbroken colt,

Chafe at the straighten'd bridle of our state—
 If they should find him lone, irresolute,
 As is his wont . . . I know he lacks the eye
 And forehead wherewith crown'd Capacity
 Awes rash Rebellion back.

Again that shout !

Gods keep Ægisthus safe ! myself will front
 This novel storm. How my heart leaps to danger !
 I have been so long a pilot on rough seas,
 And almost rudderless !

O yet 'tis much
 To feel a power, self-centred, self-assured,
 Bridling a glorious danger ! as when one
 That knows the nature of the elements
 Guides some frail plank with sublime skill that wins
 Progress from all obstruction ; and, erect,
 Looks bold and free down all the dripping stars,
 Hearing the hungry storm boom, baffled, by.
 Ægisthus ! . . . hark ! . . . Ægisthus ! . . . there . . .
 Ægisthus !

I would to all the gods I knew him safe.
 Who comes this way, guiding his racing feet
 Up to us, like a nimble charioteer ?

IV. CLYTEMNESTRA. HERALD.

Clytemnestra. Now, gloom-bird ! are there prodigies about ?

What new ill-thing sent thee before ?

Herald.

O Queen—

Clytemnestra. Speak, if thou hast a voice ! I listen.

Herald.

O Queen—

Clytemnestra. Hath an ox trodden on thy tongue?

. . . Speak then !

Herald. O Queen (for haste hath caught away my
breath)

The King is coming.

Clytemnestra. Say again—the King
Is coming—

Herald. Even now, the broad sea-fields
Grow white with flocks of sails, and toward the west
The sloped horizon teems with rising beaks.

Clytemnestra. The people know this?

Herald. Heard you not the noise?
For soon as this wing'd news had touch'd the gates
The whole land shouted in the sun.

Clytemnestra. So soon !
The thought's outsped by the reality,
And halts agape . . . the King—

Herald. How she is moved !
A noble woman !

Clytemnestra. Wherefore beat so fast,
Thou foolish heart? 'tis not thy master—

Herald. Truly
She looks all over Agamemnon's mate.

Clytemnestra. Destiny, Destiny! The deed's half
done.

Herald. She will not speak, save by that brood-
ing eye

Whose light is language. Some great thought, I see,
Mounts up the royal chambers of her blood,
As a king mounts his palace; holds high pomp
In her Olympian bosom; gains her face,
Possesses all her noble glowing cheek

With sudden state ; and gathers grandly up
Its slow majestic meanings in her eyes !

Clytemnes. So quick this sudden joy hath taken us,
I scarce can realize the sum of it.

You say the King comes here—the King, my husband,
Whom we have waited for ten years—O joy !

Pardon our seeming roughness at the first.

Hope, that will often fawn upon despair

And flatter desperate chances, when the event

Falls at our feet, soon takes a querulous tone,

And jealous of that perfect joy she guards,

Snarls at all comers, like a hungry hound

Whose paw is on the bone, he leap'd erewhile

To win, or, couching, craved with gentle craft.

But now do you, with what good speed you may,

Make known this glad intelligence to all.

Ourselves, within, as best befits a wife

And woman, will prepare my husband's house.

Also, I pray you, summon to our side

Our cousin, Ægisthus. We would speak with him.

We would that our own lips should be the first

To break these tidings to him ; so obtaining

New joy by sharing his. And, for yourself,

Receive our gratitude. For this great news

Henceforth you hold our royal love in fee.

Our fairest fortunes from this day I date,

And to the House of Tantalus new honour.

Herald. She's gone ! With what a majesty she fill'd

The whole of space ! The statues of the gods

Are not so godlike. She has Heræ's eyes,

And looks immortal !

V. CLYTEMNESTRA. CHORUS.●

Clytemnestra (as she ascends the steps of the Palace).

So . . . while on the verge

Of some wild purpose we hang dizzily,
 Weighing the danger of the leap below
 Against the danger of retreating steps,
 Upon a sudden, some forecast event,
 Issuing full-arm'd from councils of the gods,
 Strides to us, plucks us by the hair, and hurls
 Headlong pale Conscience, to the abyss of Crime.
 Well—I shrink not. 'Tis but a leap in life.
 There's fate in this. Why is he here so soon?
 The sight of whose abhorred eyes will add
 Whatever lacks of strength to this resolve.
 Away with shame! I have had enough of it.
 What's here for shame? . . the weak against the strong?
 And if the weak be victor? . . what of that?
 Tush! . . there—my soul is set to it. What need
 Of argument to justify an act
 Necessity compels, and must absolve?
 For that which must be, being what it must,
 Is neither well nor ill; nor is there good
 Or evil in unmindful circumstance;
 But that's wrong only which doth contradict
 Its being, being to itself untrue.
 And I, that am not blown about by chance,
 But moved to my design as thunder-clouds
 That, moving, in their conscious bosoms bear
 The angry meaning of a god, obey
 Forces within me which flow all one way.

Chorus. Upon the everlasting hills
Thronèd Justice works, and waits.
Between the shooting of a star,
That falls unseen on summer nights
Out of the bosom of the dark,
And the magnificent march of War,
Roll'd from angry lands afar
Round some doomèd city gates,
Nothing is to her unknown;
Nothing unseen.
Upon her hills she sits alone,
And in the balance of Eternity
Poises against the What-has-been
The weight of What-shall-be.
She sums the account of human ills.
The great world's hoarded wrongs and rights
Are in her treasures. She will mark,
With inward-searching eyes sublime,
The frauds of Time.
The empty future years she fills
Out of the past. All human wills
Sway to her on her reachless heights.

Wisdom she teaches men, with tears,
In the toilful school of years :
Climbing from event to event,
And, being patient, is content
To stretch her sightless arms about,
And find some human instrument,
From many sorrows to work out
Her distant, undivulged intent.

She the two Atridæ sent
Upon Ilion ; giving vent
To Heaven's vengeance, that, befriending
Injured Honour, not unheard
Cried against the Phrygian Crime :
Them the Thunder-bearing Bird,
From the thunder-loft descending,
Sought and summon'd forth to fates sublime.

She, being injured, for the sake
Of her, the often-wedded wife
(Too loved, and too adoring !)
Many a brazen band did break
In many a breathless battle-strife ;
Many a noble life did take ;
Many a headlong agony,
Phrenzied shout, and frantic cry,
For Greek and Trojan storing.

When, the spear in the onset being shiver'd,
The reeling ranks were roll'd together
Like mad waves mingling in windy weather,
Dasht fearfully over and over each other.
And the plumes of Princes were toss'd and thrust,
And dragg'd about in the shameful dust ;
And the painful, panting breath
Came and went in the tug of death :
And the sinews were loosen'd, and the strong knees
stricken :
And the eyes began to darken and thicken :
And the arm of the mighty and terrible quiver'd.
O Love ! Love ! Love ! How terrible art thou !
How terrible !
O, what hast thou to do

With men of mortal years,
Who toil Below,
And have enough of griefs for tears to flow ?
O range in higher spheres !
Hast thou, O hast thou, no diviner hues
To paint thy wings, but must transfuse
An Iris-light from tears ?
For human hearts are all too weak to hold thee.
And how, O Love, shall human arms enfold thee ?
There is a seal of sorrow on thy brow.
There is a scorching blight upon thy breath.
With life thou lurest, yet thou givest death.
O Love, the gods are weak by reason of thee,
And many wars have been upon the earth.
Thou art the sweetest source of saltiest sorrows.
Thy blest to-days bring such unblest to-morrows ;
Thy softest hope makes saddest memory.
Thou hadst destruction in thee from the birth ;
Incomprehensible !

O Love, thy brightest bridal garments
Are poison'd, like that robe of agonies
Which Deianira wove for Hercules,
And, being put on, turn presently to cerements !
Thou art unconquer'd in the fight.
Thou rangest over land and sea.
O let the foolish nations be !
Keep thy divine desire
To upheave mountains, or to kindle fire
From the keen frost, and set the world alight.
Why make thy red couch in the damask cheek ?
Or light thy torch at languid eyes ?

Or lie entangled in soft sighs
 On pensive lips that will not speak ?
 To sow the seeds of evil things
 In the hearts of headstrong kings ?
 Preparing many a kindred strife
 For the fearful future hour ?
 O leave the wretched race of man,
 Whose days are but the dying seasons' span ;
 Vex not his painful life !
 Make thine immortal sport
 In Heaven's high court,
 And cope with gods that are of equal power.

VI. ELECTRA. CHORUS. CLYTEMNESTRA.

Electra. Now is at hand the hour of retribution.
 For my father, at last returning,
 In great power, being greatly injured,
 Will destroy the base adulterer,
 And efface the shameful Past.

Chorus. O child of the godlike Agamemnon !
 Leave vengeance to the power of Heaven ;
 Nor forestall with impious footsteps
 The brazen tread of black Erinnyes.

Electra. Is it, besotted with the adulterous sin,
 Or, as with flattery pleasing present power,
 Or, being intimidate, you speak these words ?

Chorus. Nay, but desiring justice, like yourself.

Electra. Yet Justice oft-times uses mortal means.

Chor. But flings aside her tools when work is done.

Clytemnestra. O dearest friends, inform me, went
 this way

Ægisthus ?

Chorus. Even now, hurrying hitherward,
I see him walk, with irritated eyes.

Clytemnestra. A reed may show which way the
tempest blows.

That face is pale—those brows are dark . . . ah !

VII. ÆGISTHUS. CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ægisthus. Agamemnon—

Clytemnestra. My husband . . . well ?

Ægisthus. (Whom may the great Gods curse !)

Is scarce an hour hence.

Clytemnestra. Then that hour's yet saved
From sorrow. Smile, Ægisthus—

Ægisthus. Hear me speak.

Clytemnestra. Not as your later wont hath been
to smile—

Quick, fierce, as though you scarce could hurry out
The wild thing fast enough ; for smiling's sake,
As if to show you could smile, though in fear
Of what might follow—but as first you smiled
Years, years ago, when some slow loving thought
Stole down your face, and settled on your lips,
As though a sunbeam halted on a rose,
And mix'd with fragrance, light. Can you smile still
Just so, Ægisthus ?

Ægisthus. These are idle words,
And like the wanderings of some fever'd brain :
Extravagant phrases, void of import, wild.

Clytemnestra. Ah, no ! you cannot smile so, more.

Nor I !

Ægisthus. Hark ! in an hour the King—

Clytemnestra. Must meet him.

Ægisthus. Meet? ay . . . how?

Clytem. As mortals should meet fortune—calmly.

Ægisthus. Quick!

Consult! consult! Yet there is time to choose
The path to follow.

Clytemnestra. I have chosen it
Long since.

Ægisthus. How?—

Clytemnestra. Oh, have we not had ten years
To ripen counsel, and mature resolve?
What's to add now?

Ægisthus. I comprehend you not.
The time is plucking at our sleeve.

Clytemnestra. *Ægisthus!*
There shall be time for deeds, and soon enough,
Let that come when it may. And it may be
Deeds must be done shall shut and shrivel up
All quiet thoughts, and quite preclude repose
To the end of time. Upon this awful strait
And promontory of our mortal life
We stand between what was, and is not yet.
The gods allot to us a little space,
Before the contests which must soon begin,
For calmer breathing. All before lies dark
And difficult, and perilous, and strange;
And all behind . . . What if we take one look,
One last long lingering look (before despair,
The shadow of failure, or remorse, which often
Waits on success, can come 'twixt us and it,
And darken all) at that which yet must seem
Undimm'd in the long retrospect of years—

The beautiful imperishable Past !
 Were this not natural, being innocent now
 —At least of that which is the greater crime ?
 To-night we shall not be so.

Ægisthus. Ah, to-night !

Clytemnestra. All will be done which now the
 gods foresee.

The sun shines still.

Ægisthus. I oft have mark'd some day
 Begin all gold in his flusht orient,
 With splendid promise to the waiting world,
 And turn to blackness ere the sun ran down.
 So draws our love to its dark close. To-night—

Clytemnestra. Shall bring our bridals, my Be-
 loved ! For, either

Upon the melancholy shores of Death
 (One shadow near the doors of Pluto), greeted
 By pale Proserpina, our steps shall be,
 Or else, secure, in the great empty palace
 We shall sleep crown'd—no noise to startle us—
 And Argos silent round us—all our own !

Ægisth. In truth I do not dare to think this thing,
 For all the Greeks will hate us.

Clytemnestra. What of that ?

If that they do not harm us—as who shall ?

Ægisth. Moreover, though we triumph in the act
 (And we may fail, and fall), we shall go down
 Cover'd with this reproach into the tomb,
 Hunted by all the red Eumenides ;
 And, in the end, the ghost of him we slew,
 Being beforehand there, will come between
 Us and the awful Judges of the Dead !

And no one on this earth will pray for us ;
 And no har:d will hang garlands on our urns,
 Either of man, or maid, or little child ;
 But we shall be dishonour'd.

Clytemnestra.

O faint heart !

When this poor life of ours is done with—all
 Its foolish days put by—its bright and dark—
 Its praise and blame—roll'd quite away—gone o'er
 Like some brief pageant—will it stir us more,
 Where we are gone, how men may hoot or shout
 After our footsteps, than the dust and garlands
 A few mad boys and girls fling in the air
 When a great host is pass'd, can cheer or vex
 The minds of men already out of sight
 Towards other lands, with pæan and with pomp
 Array'd near vaster forces ? For the future,
 We will smoke hecatombs, and build new fanes,
 And be you sure the gods deal leniently
 With those who grapple for their life, and pluck it
 From the closed gripe of Fate, albeit perchance
 Some ugly smutch, some drop of blood or so,
 A spot here, there a streak, or stain of gore,
 Should in the contest fall to them, and mar
 That life's original whiteness.

Ægisthus.

Tombs have tongues

That talk in Hades. Think it ! Dare we hope,
 This done, to be more happy ?

Clytemnestra.

My Beloved,

We are not happy—we may never be,
 Perchance, again. Yet it is much to think
 We have been so : and even though we must weep,
 We have enjoy'd.

The roses and the thorns
 We have pluck'd together. We have proved both. Say,
 Was it not worth the bleeding hands they left us
 To have won such flowers? And if 't were possible
 To keep them still—keep even the wither'd leaves,
 Even the wither'd leaves are worth our care.
 We will not tamely give up life—such life!
 What though the years before, like those behind,
 Be dark as clouds the thunder sits among,
 Tipt only here and there with a wan gold
 More bright for rains between?—'tis much—'tis more,
 For we shall ever think “the sun's behind.
 The sun must shine before the day goes down!”
 Anything better than the long, long night,
 And that perpetual silence of the tomb!
 'Tis not for happier hours, but life itself,
 Which may bring happier hours, we strike at Fate.
 Why, though from all the treasury of the Past
 'Tis but one solitary gem we save—
 One kiss more such as we have kist, one smile,
 One more embrace, one night more such as those
 Which we have shared, how costly were the prize,
 How richly worth the attempt! Indeed, I know,
 When yet a child, in those dim pleasant dreams
 A girl will dream, perchance in twilit hours,
 Or under eve's first star (when we are young
 Happiness seems so possible—so near!
 One says, “it must go hard, but I shall find it!”)
 Ofttimes I mused—“My life shall be my own,
 To make it what I will.” It is their fault
 (I thought) who miss the true delights. I thought
 Men might have saved themselves: they flung away,

Too easily abasht, life's opening promise :
But all things will be otherwise for me.
For I felt life so strong in me ! indeed
I was so sure of my own power to love
And to enjoy—I had so much to give,
I said, “ be sure it must win something back ! ”
Youth is so confident ! And though I saw
All women sad—not only those I knew,
As Helen (whom from youth I knew, nor ever
Divined that sad impenetrable smile
Which oft would darken through her lustrous eyes,
As, drawing slowly down o'er her cold cheek
The yellow braids of odorous hair, she turn'd
From Meneläus praising her, and sigh'd—
That was before he, flinging bitterly down
The trampled parsley-crown and undrain'd goblet,
Cursed before all the gods his sudden shame
And young Hermione's deserted youth !)
Not only her—but all whose lives I learn'd,
Medea, Deianeira, Ariadne,
And many others—all weak, wrong'd, opprest,
Or sick and sorrowful, as I am now—
Yet in their fate I would not see my own,
Nor grant allegiance to that general law
From which a few, I knew a very few,
With whom it seem'd I also might be number'd,
Had yet escaped securely :—so exempting
From this world's desolation everywhere
One fate—my own !

Well, that ~~was~~ foolish ! Now
I am not so exacting. As we move
Further and further down the path of fate

To the sure tomb, we yield up, one by one,
 Our claims on Fortune, till with each new year
 We seek less and go further to obtain it.
 'Tis the old tale—that's ever told anew,
 Ever in vain! O there is thrift in Fate,
 Thrift, patching thrift, *Ægisthus*! that contrives
 Endless new uses for the same old stuff,
 And garments us with the discarded robes
 Of our released forerunners. Yet even this
 Ill-fitting life I would not fling away
 Ere thoroughly worn out,—no effort made
 To mend, and make it . . . what it yet may be!

Ægisthus. What can we make it less than miserable?

More wrong will be, and then more wretchedness.
 Best we part now.

Clytemnestra. Part! what, to part from thee!
 Never till death—not in death even, part!

Ægisthus. But one course now is left.

Clytemnestra. And that is—

Ægisthus. Flight.

Clytemnestra. Coward!

Ægisthus. I care not.

Clytemnestra. Flight! I am a Queen.

A goddess once you said—and why not goddess?
 Seeing the gods are mightier than we
 By so much more of courage. Oh, not I,
 But you, are mad.

Ægisthus. Nay, wiser than I was.

Clytemnestra. And you will leave me?

Ægisthus. Not if you will come.

Clytemnestra. This was the Atlas of the world I built!

Ægisthus. Flight ! . . . yes, I know not . . . somewhere . . . anywhere.

You come ? . . . you come not ? . . . well ? . . . no time to pause !

Clytemnestra. And this is he—this he, the man I loved !

And this is retribution ! O my heart !
O Agamemnon, how art thou avenged !
And I have done so much for him ! . . . would do
So much ! . . . a universe lies ruin'd here.
Now, by Apollo, be a man for once !
Be for once strong, or be for ever weak !
If shame be dead, and honour be no more,
No more true faith, nor that which in old time
Made us like Gods, sublime in our high place,
Yet all surviving instincts warn from flight.
Flight !—oh, impossible ! Even now the steps
Of fate are at the threshold. Which way fly ?
For every avenue is barr'd by death.
Will these not scout your flying heels ? If now
They hate us powerful, will they love us weak ?
No land is safe ; nor any neighbouring king
Will harbour Agamemnon's enemy.
Reflect on Troy ; her ashes smoulder yet.

Ægisthus. Her words compel me with their awful truth ;

For so would vengeance hound and earth us down.

Clytemnestra. If I am weak to move you by that love

You swore long since—and seal'd it with false lips !
Yet lives there nothing of the ambitious will ?
Of those proud plots, and dexterous policy,

Whereon you builded such high hopes, and swore
 To rule this people Agamemnon rules ;^c
 Supplant him eminent on his own throne,
 And push our power through Greece ?

Ægisthus. The dream was great !
 It was a dream. We dream'd it like a King.

Clytemnes. Ay, and shall so fulfil it—like a King !
 Who talks of flight ? For now, bethink you well,
 If to live on, the by-word of a world,
 Be any gain, even such flight offers not.
 Will long-arm'd Vengeance never find you out
 When you have left the weapon in her hands ?
 Be bold, and meet her ! Who forestall the bolts
 Of heaven, the gods deem worthy of the gods.
 Success is made the measure of our acts.
 And think, *Ægisthus*, there has been one thought
 Before us in the intervals of years,
 Between us ever in the long dark nights,
 When, lying all awake, we heard the wind.
 Did you shrink then ? or, only closer drawing
 Your lips to mine, your arms about my neck,
 Say, “ Who would fear such chances, when he saw
 Behind them such a prize for him as this ? ”
 Do you shrink now ? Dare you put all this from you ?
 Revoke the promise of those years, and say
 This prospect meets you unprepared at last ?
 Our motives are so mixt in their beginnings
 And so confused, we recognize them not
 Till they are grown to acts ; but ne'er were ours
 So blindly woven,^e but what we both untangled
 Out of the intricacies of the heart
 One purpose :—being found, best grapple to it.

For to conceive ill deeds yet dare not do them,
This is not Virtue, but a twofold shame.
The weakly-wicked shall be doubly damn'd !

Ægisthus. I am not weak . . . what will you? . .

O too weak

To bear this scorn !

Clytemnestra. My heart inhabits thine.
In thee the best of all I am doth live.
Have thou a manly made up mind foursquare
To opposition. For the world, indeed,
Is many, but divided : if we two
Be one, then is our twofold oneness more
And mightier than all the world. O friend,
Those who on perilous ventures once embark
Should burn their ships, nor ever dream return.
Better, though all Olympus march'd on us,
To die like fallen Titans, scorning Heaven,
Than live like slaves in scorn of our own selves !

Ægisthus. We wait then? Good! and dare this
desperate chance.

And if we fall (as we, I think, must fall)
It is but some few sunny hours we lose,
Some few bright days. True! and a little less
Of life, or else of wrong a little more,
What's that? For one shade more or less the night
Will scarce seem darker or lighter—the long night!
We'll die together,—

Clytemnestra. Or together live !
Now you resume yourself, your royal self,
Your true self—my true love's elected lord !
Nor will I deem your foot less firm than mine,
Treading the rugged road of this resolve,

Because your gaze is on the dreadful base,
 Mine on the glorious eminence. But here
 Our way lies upward over an abyss ;
 Look not below, there's peril in it. We both
 Must fix our sight upon the summit fast,
 Nor ever let go hands. Dear love, be sure
 Whate'er betide, whether for well or ill,
 Thy fate and mine are bound up in one skein,
 Clotho must cut them both inseparate.
 You dare not leave me—had you wings for flight !
 You shall not leave me ! You are mine,—you are me !
 Live in my life ! monarch of me that am
 Your life's necessity, as you my love's.
 Love me, that I may live : and live, dear love,
 That I may love you. In your love's my life,
 And my life's yours : for, as your life you love,
 So doth my life love you : and, for love's sake,
 I mean that you, for life's sake, shall love me.
 —His lip's compest—his eye dilates—he is saved !

Ægisthus. If . . .

Clytemnestra. If's a coward.

Ægisthus. If we live, I say,—

Clytemnestra. And we shall live.

Ægisthus. Yet . . . yet—

Clytemnestra. What ! shrinking still ?

I'll do the deed. Do not stand off from me.

Ægisthus. O, breathe not, breathe not on me !
 not so near !

Thy breath throbs in me, like a living thing.

Thou look'st a woman, but thou art not one.

Clytemnestra. I am a woman, and I feel as one.

Ægisthus. No, you great gods ! have merely mortal eyes

This strange and thrilling power to overwhelm
 And waste tis in a wonder without end?
 Thou nameless spirit, terrible and fair!

Clytemnestra. Not terrible! Ah me, not terrible,
 Not to thee terrible—O say not so!
 To thee I never have been anything
 But a weak, passionate, unhappy woman
 (O woe is me!) and now you fear me—

Ægisthus. No,

But rather worship.

Clytemnestra. Worship? . . . ah but love—

Ægisthus. O intricate eyes, beneath whose reg-
 nant orbs

My spirit is as still as night beneath
 The stargirt glory of the solemn moon!

Clytemnestra. I will not doubt! All's lost, if love
 be lost—

Peace, honour, innocence—gone, gone! all gone!
 And you, too—you, poor baffled crownless schemer,
 Whose life my love makes royal, clothes in purple,
 Establishes in state, without me, answer me,
 What should you do but perish, as is fit?
 O love, you dare not cease to love me now!
 We have let the world go by us. We have trusted
 To ourselves only: if we fail ourselves
 What shall avail us now? Without my love
 What rests for you but universal hate,
 And Agamemnon's sword? Ah, no—you love me,
 Must love me, better than you ever loved—
 Love me, I think, as you love life itself:

Ægisthus! Speak, *Ægisthus!*

Ægisthus.

Mighty heart!

I am all yours. Do with me what you will.

Clytemnestra. And you do love me still?

Ægisthus.

Ay, more, thrice more,

Thrice more than wert thou Aphrodite's self
Stept zoned and sandal'd from the Olympian Feast,
Or first reveal'd among the pink sea-foam.

Clytemnes. Whate'er I am, be sure that I am that
Which thou hast made me—nothing of myself.
Once, all unheedful, careless of myself,
And wholly ignorant of what I was,
I grew up as a reed some wind will touch,
And wake to prophecy—till then all mute,
And void of melody—a foolish weed!
My soul was blind, and all my life was dark,
And all my heart pined with some ignorant want.
I moved about, a shadow in the house,
And felt unwedded though I was a wife;
And all the men and women which I saw
Were but as pictures painted on a wall:
To me they had not either heart, or brain,
Or lips, or language—pictures! nothing more.
Then, suddenly, athwart those lonely hours
Which day by day dream'd listlessly away,
Led to the dark and melancholy tomb,
Thy presence pass'd and touch'd me with a soul.
My life did but begin when I found thee.
Oh what a strength was hidden in this heart!
As, all unvalued, in its cold dark cave
Under snow hills, some rare and priceless gem
May sparkle and burn, so in this life of mine
Love lay shut up. You broke the rock away,
You lit upon the jewel that it hid,

You pluck'd it forth—to wear it, my Beloved !
 To set it in the crown of thy dear life !
 To embellish fortune ! Cast it not away.
 Now call me by the old familiar names :
 Call me again your Queen, as once you used ;
 Your large-eyed Herè !

Ægisthus. Oh, you are a Queen
 That should have none but gods to rule over !
 Make me immortal with one costly kiss !

VIII. CHORUS. ELECTRA. CLYTEMNESTRA.
 ÆGISTHUS.

Chorus. Io ! Io ! I hear the people shout.

Electra. See how these two do mutually confer,
 Hatching new infamy. Now will he dare,
 In his unbounded impudence, to meet
 My father's eyes ? The hour is nigh at hand.

Clytemnestra. O love, be bold ! the hour is nigh
 at hand.

Electra. Laden with retribution, lingering slow.

Ægisthus. A time in travail with some great dis-
 tress.

Clytemnes. Nay, rather safety for the rest of time.
 O love ! O hate !

Electra. O vengeance !

Ægisthus. O wild chance !

If favouring fate—

Clytemnestra. Despair is more than fate.

Chorus. Io ! Io ! The King is on his march.

Ægisthus. Did you hear that ?

Electra. The hour is nigh at hand !

Clytemnestra. Leave me to deal with these. I
know the arts

That guide the doubtful purpose of discourse
Through many windings to the appointed goal.
I'll draw them on to such a frame of mind
As best befits our purpose. You, meanwhile,
Scatter vague words among the other crowd,
Lest the event, when it is due, fall foul
Of unpropitious natures.

Ægisthus. Do you fear
The helpless, blind ill will of such a crowd?

Clytemnestra. He only fears mankind who knows
them not.

But him I praise not who despises them.
This man! . . . the sun of his exceeding glory
Unclouded shines to melt the waxen wings
Of our design, and this weak-hearted crowd
That pours itself in praises! But anon
I, like the cold invisible winter's wind,
Will creep into his crannies with strange frost,
Wither his summer ere the sere, blow storms
Upon him, spoil his flaring. Fear not you.
Trust me, it shall go hard but I'll frost-bite him!
Whence come, Electra?

Electra. From my father's hearth
To meet him; for the hour is nigh at hand.

Clytemnestra. So do our hopes race hotly to one
end,

(A noble rivalry!) as who shall first
Embrace this happy fortune. Tarry not.
We too will follow.

Electra. Justice, O be swift!

IX. CLYTEMNESTRA. CHORUS. SEMI-CHORUS.
HERALD.

Clytemnestra. A froward child ! She's gone. My
blood's in her.

Her father's, too, looks out of that proud face.
She is too bold . . . ha, well—Ægisthus ? . . . gone !
O fate ! to be a woman ! You great gods,
Why did you fashion me in this soft mould ?
Give me these lengths of silky hair ? these hands
Too delicately dimpled ! and these arms
Too white, too weak ! yet leave the man's heart in me,
To mar your master-piece—that I should perish,
Who else had won renown among my peers,
A man, with men—perchance a god with you,
Had you but better sex'd me, you blind gods !
But, as for man, all things are fitting to him.
He strikes his fellow 'mid the clanging shields,
And leaps among the smoking walls, and takes
Some long-hair'd virgin wailing at the shrines,
Her brethren having fallen ; and you gods
Commend him, crown him, grant him ample days,
And dying honour, and an endless peace
Among the deep Elysian asphodels.
O fate, to be a woman ! To be led
Dumb, like a poor mule, at a master's will,
And be a slave, though bred in palaces,
And be a fool, though seated with the wise—
A poor and pitiful fool, as I am now,
Loving and hating my vain life away !

Chorus. These flowers—we pluck'd them

At morning, and took them
From bright bees that suck'd them
And warm winds that shook them
'Neath blue hills that o'er-look them.

Semi-chorus. With the dews of the meadow
Our rosy warm fingers
Sparkle yet, and the shadow
Of the summer-cloud lingers
In the hair of us singers.

Second Semi-chorus. Ere these buds on our altars
Fade ; ere the fork'd fire,
Fed with pure honey falters,
And fails ; louder, higher
Raise the Pæan !

First Semi-chorus. Draw nigher,
Stand closer ! First praise we
The Father of all.
To him the song raise we.
Over Heaven's golden wall
Let it fall ! Let it fall !

Second Semi-chorus. Then Apollo, the king of
The lyre and the bow ;
Who taught us to sing of
The deeds that we know—
Deeds well done long ago.

First Semi-chorus. Next, of all the Immortals,
Athenè's grey eyes ;
Who sits throned in our portals,
Ever fair, ever wise.

Second Semi-chorus. Neither dare we despise
To extol the great Herè.

First Semi-chorus. And then,

As is due, shall our song
 Be of those among men
 Who were brave, who were strong,
 Who endured.

Second Semi-chorus. Then, the wrong
 Of the Phrygian : and Ilion's false sons :
 And Scamander's wild wave
 Through the bleak plain that runs.

First Semi-chorus. Then, the death of the brave.

Second Semi-chorus. Last, of whom the Gods save
 For new honours in story :
 With whom, the most blest,
 May our King now in glory
 Return to his rest !

Clytemnestra. O friends, true hearts, rejoice with
 me ! This day

Shall crown the hope of ten uncertain years !

Chorus. For Agamemnon cannot be far off—

Clytemnestra. He comes—and yet—the gods pre-
 serve us all !

My heart is weak—there's One he brings not back ;
 Who went with him ; who will not come again ;
 Whom we shall never see !—

Chorus. O Queen, for whom,
 Lamenting thus, is your great heart cast down ?

Clytemnestra. The earliest loved—the early lost !
 my child—

Chorus. Iphigenia ?

Clytemnestra. She—my child—

Chorus. • —Alas !

That was a terrible necessity !

Clytemnestra. Was it necessity ? O pardon, friends,

But in the dark, unsolaced solitude,
Wild thoughts come to me, and perplex my heart.
This, which you call a dread necessity,
Was it a murder or a sacrifice?

Chorus. It was a god that did decree the death.

Clytemnestra. 'Tis through the heart the gods do
speak to us.

High instincts are the oracles of heaven.
Did ever heart—did ever god, before,
Suggest such foul infanticidal act?

Chorus. Be comforted! The universal good
Needed this single, individual loss.

Clytemnestra. Can all men's good be help'd by
one man's crime?

Chorus. He loosed the Greeks from Aulis by that
deed.

Clytemnestra. O specious argument! Who gave
the Greeks

Such bloody claim upon a virgin's life?
Shall the pure bleed to purge impurity?
A hundred Helens were not worth that death!
What! had the manhood of combinèd Greece,
Whose boast was in its untamed strength, no help
Better than the spilt blood of one poor girl?
Or, if it were of need that blood should flow,
What god ordain'd him executioner?
Was it for him the Armament was plann'd?
For him that angry Greece was leagued in war?
For him, or Menelaus, was this done?
Was the cause his, or Menelaus' cause?
Was he less sire than Menelaus was?
He, too, had children; did he murder them?

O, was it manlike? was it human, even?

Chorus. Alas! alas! it was an evil thing.

Clytemnestra. O friends, if any one among you all,
If any be a mother, bear with me!

She was my earliest born, my best beloved.

The painful labour of that perilous birth

That gave her life did almost take my own.

He had no pain. He did not bring her forth.

How should he, therefore, love her as I loved?

Chor. Ai! ai! alas! our tears run down with yours.

Clytemnestra. Oh, who shall say with what delicious tears,

With what ineffable tenderness, while he

Took his blithe pastime on the windy plain,

Among the ringing camps and neighing steeds,

First of his glad compeers, I sat apart,

Silent, within the solitary house;

Rocking the little child upon my breast;

And soothed its soft eyes into sleep with song!

Chorus. Ai! ai! unhappy, sad, unchilded one!

Clytemnestra. Or, when I taught, from inarticulate sounds,

The little lisping lips to breathe his name.

Now they will never breathe that name again!

Chorus. Alas! for Hades hath not any hope,

Since Thracian women lopp'd the tuneful head

Of Orpheus, and Heracles is no more.

Clytemnestra. Or, spread in prayer the helpless,
infant hands,

That they, too, might invoke the gods for him.

Alas, who now invokes the gods for her?

Unwedded, hapless, gone to glut the womb

Of dark, untimely Orcus !

Chorus. Ai ! alas ! •

Clytemnestra. I would have died, if that could
be, for her !

When life is half-way set to feeble eld,
And memory more than hope, and to dim eyes
The gorgeous tapestry of existence shows
Moth'd, finger'd, fray'd, and bare, 'twere not so hard
To fling away this ravell'd skein of life,
Which else, a little later, Fate had cut.
And who would sorrow for the o'er-blown rose
Sharp winter strews about its own bleak thorns ?
But, cropp'd before the time, to fall so young !
And wither in the gloomy crown of Dis !
Never to look upon the blessèd sun—

Chorus. Ailino ! ailino ! It was not well.

Clytemnestra. And I had dream'd such splendid
dreams for her !

Who would not so for Agamemnon's child ?
For we had hoped that she, too, in her time
Would be the mother of heroic men !

Chorus. There rises in my heart an awful fear,
Lest from these evils darker evils come ;
For Heaven exacts, for wrong, the uttermost tear,
And death hath language after life is dumb !

Clytemnestra. It works ! it works !

Chorus. Look, some one comes this way.

Herald. O Honour of the House of Tantalus !

The King's wheels echo in the brazen gates.

Clytemnestra. •Our heart is half-way there, to wel-
come him.

How looks he ? Well ? And all our long-lost friends—

Their faces grow before me ! Lead the way
Where we may meet them. All our haste seems slow.

Chorus. Would that he brought his dead child
back with him !

Clytemnestra. Now let him come. The mischief
works apace !

X. CHORUS.

Chor. The winds were lull'd in Aulis ; and the day
Down-sloped, was loitering to the lazy west.
There was no motion of the glassy bay,
But all things by a heavy light oppress.
Windless, cut off upon the destined way—
Dark shrouds, distinct against the lurid lull—
Dark ropes hung useless, loose, from mast to hull—
The black ships lay abreast.
Not any cloud would cross the hollow skies.
The distant sea boom'd faintly. Nothing more.
They walk'd about upon the yellow shore ;
Or, lying listless, huddled groups supine,
With faces turn'd toward the flat sea-spine,
They plann'd the Phrygian battle o'er and o'er ;
Till each grew sullen, and would talk no more,
But sat, dumb-dreaming. Then would some one rise,
And look up at the high mast-heads with haggard,
hopeless eyes.
Wild eyes—and, crowding round, yet wilder eyes—
And gaping, languid lips ;
And everywhere that men could see,
About the black-ribb'd ships,
Was nothing but the deep-red sea ;

The deep-red shore ;
The deep-red skies ;
The deep-red silence, thick with thirsty sighs ;
And daylight, dying slowly. Nothing more.
The tall masts stood upright ;
And not a sail above the burnish'd prores ;
The languid sea, like one outwearied quite,
Shrank, dying inward into hollow shores,
And breathless harbours, under sandy bars ;
But, rushing swift into the hot broad blue,
The intense, sultry stars
Burn'd strong, and singed the simmering welkin thro' ;
And, all below, the sick and steaming brine
The spill'd-out sunset did incarnadine.

At last one broke the silence ; and a word
Was lisp'd and buzz'd about, from mouth to mouth ;
Pale faces grew more pale ; wild whispers stirr'd ;
And men, with moody, murmuring lips, conferr'd
In ominous tones, from shaggy beards uncouth :
As though some wind had broken from the blurr'd
And blazing prison of the stagnant drouth,
And stirr'd the salt sea in the stifled south.
The long-robed priests stood round ; and, in the gloom,
Under black brows, their bright and greedy eyes
Shone deathfully ; there was a sound of sighs,
Thick-sobb'd from choking throats among the crowd,
That, whispering, gather'd close, with dark heads
bow'd ;

But no man lifted up his voice aloud,
For heavy hung o'er all the helpless sense of doom.

Then, after solemn prayer,

The father bade the attendants, tenderly
Lift her upon the lurid altar-stone.
There was no hope in any face ; each eye
Swam tearful, that her own did gaze upon.
They bound her helpless hands with mournful care ;
And loop'd up her long hair,
That hung about her, like an amber shower,
Mix'd with the saffron robe, and falling lower,
Down from her bare, and cold, white shoulder flung.
Upon the heaving breast the pale cheek hung,
Suffused with that wild light that roll'd among
The pausing crowd, out of the crimson drouth.
They held hot hands upon her pleading mouth ;
And stifled on faint lips the natural cry.
Back from the altar-stone,
Slow-moving in his fixèd place
A little space,
The speechless father turn'd. No word was said.
He wrapp'd his mantle close about his face,
In his dumb grief, without a moan.
The lopping axe was lifted over-head.
Then, suddenly,
There sounded a strange motion of the sea,
Booming far inland ; and above the east
A ragged cloud rose slowly, and increased.

Not one line in the horoscope of Time
Is perfect. O what falling off is this,
When some grand soul, that else had been sublime,
Falls unawares amiss,
And stoops its crested strength to sudden crime !

So gracious a thing is it, and sweet,
In life's clear centre one true man to see,
That holds strong nature in a wise control ;
Throbbing out, all round, the heat
Of a large and liberal soul.
No shadow, simulating life,
But pulses warm with human nature,
In a soul of godlike stature ;
Heart, and brain, all rich and rife
With noble instincts : strong to meet
Time calmly, in his purposed place.
Sound through and through, and all complete ;
Exalting what is low, and base ;
Enlarging what is narrow, and small ;
He stamps his character on all,
And with his grand identity
Fills up Creation's eye.
He will not dream the aimless years away
In blank delay,
But makes eternity of to-day,
And reaps the full-ear'd time. For him
Nature her affluent horn doth brim,
To strew with fruits and flowers his way—
Fruits ripe, and flowers gay.

The clear soul in his earnest eyes
Looks through and through all plaited lies ;
Time shall not rob him of his youth
Nor narrow his large sympathies.
He is not true, he is a truth,
And such a truth as never dies.

Who knows his nature, feels his right,
And, toiling, toils for his delight ;
Not as slaves toil : where'er he goes,
The desert blossoms with the rose.
He trusts himself in scorn of doubt,
And lets orb'd purpose widen out.
The world works with him ; all men see
Some part of them fulfill'd in him ;
His memory never shall grow dim ;
He holds the heaven and earth in fee.
Not following that, fulfilling this,
He is immortal, for he is !
O weep ! weep ! weep !
Weep for the young that die ;
As it were pale flowers that wither under
The smiting sun, and fall asunder,
Before the dews on the grass are dry,
Or the tender twilight is out of the sky,
Or the lilies have fall'n asleep ;
Or ships by a wanton wind cut short,
And wreck'd in sight of the placid port,
Sinking strangely, and suddenly—
Sadly, and strangely, and suddenly—
Into the black Plutonian deep.
O weep ! weep ! weep !
Weep, and bow the head,
For those whose sun is set at noon :
Whose night is dark, without a moon :
Whose aim of life is sped
Beyond pursuing woes,
And the arrow of angry foes,
To the darkness that no man knows—

The darkness among the dead.
Let us mourn, and bow the head,
And lift up the voice, and weep
For the early dead !
For the early dead we may bow the head,
And strike the breast, and weep ;
But, oh, what shall be said
For the living sorrow ?
For the living sorrow our grief—
Dumb grief—draws no relief
From tears, nor yet may borrow
Solace from sound, or speech ;—
For the living sorrow
That heaps to-morrow upon to-morrow
In piled up pain, beyond Hope's reach !
It is well that we mourn for the early dead,
Strike the breast, and bow the head ;
For the sorrow for these may be sung, or said,
And the chaplets be woven for the fallen head,
And the urns to the stately tombs be led,
And love on their memory may be fed,
And song may ennoble the anguish ;
But, oh, for the living sorrow—
For the living sorrow what hopes remain ?
For the prison'd, pining, passionate pain
That is doom'd for ever to languish,
And to languish for ever in vain,
For the want of the words that may bestead
The hunger that out of loss is bred.
O friends, for the living sorrow—
For the living sorrow—
For the living sorrow what shall be said ?

XI. A PHOCIAN. CHORUS. SEMI-CHORUS.

Phocian. O noble strangers, if indeed you be
Such as you seem, of Argos, and the land
That the unconquer'd Agamemnon rules,
Tell me is this the palace, these the roofs
Of the Atridæ, famed in ancient song?

Chorus. Not without truth you name the neigh-
bourhood,
Standing before the threshold, and the doors
Of Pelops, and upon the Argive soil.
That which you see above the Agora
Is the famed temple of the Lycian God,
And this the house of Agamemnon's queen.
But whence art thou? For if thy dusty locks,
And those soil'd sandals show with aught of truth,
Thou shouldst be come from far.

Phocian. And am so, friends,
But, by Heaven's favour, here my journey ends.

Chorus. Whence, then, thy way?

Phocian. From Phocis; charged with gifts
For Agamemnon, and with messages
From Strophius, and the sister of your king.
Our watchmen saw the beacon on the hills,
And leap'd for joy. Say, is the king yet come?

Chorus. He comes this way; stand by, I hear
them shout.

Here shall you meet him, as he mounts the hill.

Phocian. Now blest be all the Gods, from Father
Zeus,

Who reigns o'er windy Ceta, far away,
To King Apollo, with the golden horns.

Chorus. Look how they cling about him ! Far,
and near,

The town breaks loose, and follows after,
Crowding up the ringing ways.
The boy forgets to watch the steer ;
The grazing steer forgets to graze ;
The shepherd leaves the herd ;
The priest will leave the fane ;
The deep heart of the land is stirr'd
To sunny tears, and tearful laughter,
To look into his face again.
Burst, burst the brazen gates !
Throw open the hearths, and follow !
Let the shouts of the youths go up to Apollo,
Lord of the graceful quiver :
Till the tingling sky dilates—
Dilates, and palpitates ;
And, Pæan ! Pæan ! the virgins sing ;
Pæan ! Pæan ! the king ! the king !
Laden with spoils from Phrygia !
Io ! Io ! Io ! they sing
Till the pillars of Olympus ring ;
Io ! to Queen Ortygia,
Whose double torch shall burn for ever !
But thou, O Lord of the graceful quiver,
Bid, bid thy Pythian Splendour halt,
Nor quench too soon the sacred light
That gives awhile to mortal sight
The image of a land's content !
So with increased acclaim thou shalt
Take full farewell of moments spent
Not vainly, when with course down-bent

The golden-harness'd horses bright
By happy shouts are homeward sent
To pace in peace the nether vault,
And thou, released from labour quite
Beyond the sea-girt continent
Dost stall thy steeds in sable night.
Let not the breathless air grow dim,
Until the whole land look at him!

Semi-chorus. Stand back!

Semi-chorus. Will he come this way?

Semi-chorus. No; by us.

Semi-chorus. Gods, what a crowd!

Semi-chorus. How firm the old men walk!

Semi-chorus. There goes the King. I know him
by his beard.

Semi-chorus. And I, too, by the manner of his gait.
He treads the earth as though not earthly he,
But one whose wont is with the gods to walk
Along the winds of heaven above the clouds.

Semi-chorus. How grey he looks!

Semi-chorus. His cheek is seam'd with scars.

Semi-chorus. What a bull's front!

Semi-chorus. He stands up like a tower.

Semi-chorus. Ay, like some moving tower of ar-
méd men,

That carries conquest under city-walls.

Semi-chorus. He lifts his sublime head, and in his
port

Bears eminent authority.

Semi-chorus. Behold, •

His spear shows like the spindle of a Fate!

Semi-chorus. Oh, what an arm!

Semi-chorus. Most fit for such a sword ;
Look at that sword.

Semi-chorus. What shoulders !

Semi-chorus. What a throat !

Semi-chorus. What are these bearing ?

Semi-chorus. Urns.

Semi-chorus. Alas ! alas !

Semi-chorus. O friends, look here ! how are the
mighty men

Shrunk up into a little vase of earth,
A child might lift. Sheath'd each in brazen plates,
They went so heavy, they come back so light,
Sheath'd, each one, in the brazen urn of death !

Semi-ch. With what a stateliness he moves along !

Semi-chorus. See, how they touch his skirt, and
grasp his hand !

Semi-chorus. Is that the Queen ?

Semi-chorus. Ay, how she matches him !

With what grand eyes she looks up, full in his !

Semi-chorus. Say, what are these ?

Semi-chorus. Oh, Phrygians ! how they walk !

The only sad men in the crowd, I think.

Semi-chorus. But who is this, that with such
scornful brows,

And looks averted, walks among the rest ?

Semi-chorus. I know not, but some Phrygian wo-
man, sure.

S.-ch. Her heavy-fallen hair down her white neck
(A dying sunbeam tangled in each tress)
All its neglected beauty pours one way.

Semi-ch. Her looks bend ever on the alien ground.
As though the stones of Troy were in her path ;

And in the pained paleness of her brow
Sorrow hath made a regal tenement.

Semi-ch. Here comes Electra ; young Orestes, too ;
See, how he emulates his father's stride !

Semi-ch. Look at Ægisthus, where he walks apart,
And bites his lip.

Semi-chorus. I oft have seen him so
When something chafes him in his bitter moods.

Semi-chorus. Peace, here they come !

Chorus. Io ! Io ! The King

XII. AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, ÆGISTHUS,
ELECTRA, ORESTES, CASSANDRA, A PHOCIAN,
CHORUS, SEMI-CHORUS, and others in the procession.

Clytem. O blazing sun, that in thy skyey tower
Pausest to see one kingly as thyself,
Lend all thy brightest beams to light his head,
And gild our gladness ! Friends, behold the King !
Now hath Ætolian Jove, the arbiter
Of conquests, well disposed the issues here.
For every night that brought not news from Troy
Heap'd fear on fear, as waves succeed to waves,
When northern blasts blow white the Cretan main—
Knowing that thou, remote, from toil to toil
Climbedst, uncertain. Unto such an one
His children, and young offspring of the house,
Are as a field, which he, the husbandman,
Owning far off, doth only look upon
At seed time once, nor then till harvest comes ;
And his sad wife must wet with nightly tears
Unsolaced pillows, fearing for his fate.
To these how welcome, then, his glad return,

When he, as thou, comes heavy with the weight
Of great achievements, and the spoils of time.

Agamemnon. Enough! enough! we weigh you at
full worth,

And hold you dear, nor less than you rejoice;
But women ever err by over-talk.

Silence to women, as the beard to men,
Brings honour; and plain truth is hurt, not help'd,
By many words. To each his separate sphere
The gods allot. To me the sounding camp,
Steeds, and the oaken spear; to you the hearth,
Children, and household duties of the loom.
'Tis man's to win an honourable name;
Woman's to keep it honourable still.

Clytemnestra. (O beast! O weakness of this womanhood!

To let these pompous male things strut in our eyes,
And in their lordship lap themselves secure,
Because the lots in life are fallen to them!
Am I less heart and head, less blood and brain,
Less force and feeling, pulse and passion—I—
Than this self-worshipper—a lie all through?)
Forgive, if joy too long unloose our lips,
Silent so long: your words fall on my soul
As rain on thirsty lands, that feeds the dearth
With blessèd nourishment. My whole heart hears.
You speaking thus, I would be silent ever.

Agamemnon. Who is this man?

Clytemnestra. A Phocian, by his look.

Phocian. O King, from Strophius, and your sister's court,

Despatch'd with this seal'd tablet, and with gifts;

Though both express, so says my royal Head,
But poorly the rich welcome they intend.
Will you see this?—and these?

Agamemnon.

Anon! anon!

We'll look at them within. O child, thine eyes
Look warmer welcome than all words express.
Thou art mine own child by that royal brow.
Nature hath mark'd thee mine.

Electra.

O Father!

Agamemnon.

Come!

And our Orestes! He is nobly grown.
He shall do great deeds when our own are dim.
So shall men come to say "the father's sword
In the son's hands hath hewn out nobler fame."
Think of it, little one! Where is our cousin?

Ægisthus. Here! And the keys of the Acropolis?

Agamemnon. O well! this dust and heat are over-
much.

And, cousin, you look pale. Anon! anon!
Speak to us by and by. Let business wait.
Is our house order'd? we will take the bath.

Clytemnestra. Will you within? where all is or-
der'd fair

Befitting state: cool chambers, marble-floor'd
Or piled with blazing carpets, scented rare
With the sweet spirit of each odorous gum
In dim, delicious, amorous mists about
The purple-paven, silver-sided bath,
Deep, flashing, pure.

Agamemnon.

Look to our captives then.

I charge you chiefly with this woman here,
Cassandra, the mad prophetess of Troy.
See that you chafe her not in her wild moods.

XIII. CLYTEMNESTRA. ÆGISTHUS.

Clytemnestra. Linger not !

Ægisthus. What ? you will to-day—

Clytemnestra. —This hour.

Ægisthus. Oh, if some chance mar all !

Clytemnestra. We'll make chance sure.

Doubt is the doomsman of self-judged Disgrace :

But every chance brings safety to self-help.

Ægisthus. Ay, but the means—the time—

Clytemnestra. —Fulfil themselves.

O most irresolute heart ! is this a time

When, through the awful pause of life, distinct,

The sounding shears of Fate slope near, to stand

Meek, like tame wethers, and be shorn ? How say you ?

The blithe wind up, and the broad sea before him,

Who would crouch all day long beside the mast,

Counting the surges beat his idle helm,

Because between him and the golden isles

The shadow of a passing storm might hang ?

Danger, being pregnant, doth beget resolve.

Ægisthus. Thon wert not born to fail. Give me
thy hand.

Clytemnestra. Take it.

Ægisthus. It does not tremble.

Clytemnestra. O be strong !

The future hangs upon the die we cast :

Fortune plays high for us—

Ægisthus. • Gods grant she win !

OLYMPIAN STRA.

KIV. CHORUS. CASSANDRA.

Chorus. O thou that dost with globèd glory
Sweep the dark world at noon of night,
Or among snowy summits, wild and hoary,
Or through the mighty silences
Of immemorial seas,
With all the stars behind thee flying white !
O take with thee, where'er
Thou wanderest, ancient Care,
And hide her in some interlunar haunt ;
Where but the wild bird's chaunt
At night, through rocky ridges gaunt,
Or moanings of some homeless sea may find her.
There, Goddess, bar, and bind her ;
Where she may pine, but wander not ;
Loathe her haunts, but leave them not ;
Wail and rave to the wind and wave
That hear, yet understand her not ;
And curse her chains, yet cleave them not ;
And hate her lot, yet help it not.
Or let her rove with Gods undone
Who dwell below the setting sun,
And the sad Western Hours
That burn in fiery bowers ;
Or in Amphitrite's grot
Where the vexèd tides unite,
And the spent wind, howling, breaks
O'er sullen oceans out of sight
Among sea-snakes, that the white-moon wakes
Till they shake themselves into diamond flakes,
Coil and twine in the glittering brine,

And swing themselves in the long moonshine ;
Or by wild shores hoarsely rage,
And moan and vent her spite,
In some inhospitable harbourage
Of Thracian waters, white.
There let her grieve and grieve, and hold her breath,
Until she hate herself to death.
I seem with rapture lifted higher,
Like one in mystic trance.
O Pan ! Pan ! Pan !
First friend of man,
And founder of Heaven's choir,
Come thou from old Cyllenè, and inspire
The Gnosian, and Nysæan dance !
Come thou, too, Delian king,
From the blue Ægean sea,
And Mycone's yellow coast :
Give my spirit such a wing
As there the foolish Icarus lost,
That she may soar above the cope
Of this high pinnacle of gladness,
And dizzy height of hope ;
And there, beyond all reach of sadness,
May tune my lips to sing
Great Pæans, full and free,
Till the whole world ring
With such heart-melting madness
As bards are taught by thee !

Semi-chorus. Look to the sad Cassandra, how she
stands ! •

Semi-chorus. She turns not from the wringing of
her hands.

We would console you.

Semi-chorus. Look, how she is moved!

Semi-chorus. O speak! the heart's hurt oft is
help'd by words.

Cassandra. O Itys! Itys! Itys!

Semi-chorus. What a shriek!

She takes the language of the nightingale,
Unhappy bird! that mourns her perish'd form,
And leans her breast against a thorn, all night.

Cassandra. The bull is in the shambles.

Semi-chorus. Listen, friends!

She mutters something to herself.

Cassandra. Alas!

Did any name Apollo? woe is mine!

Semi-chorus. She calls upon the God.

Semi-chorus. Unhappy one,

What sorrow strikes thee with bewilderment ?

Semi-chorus. Now she is mute again.

Chorus.

A Stygian cold

Now loosens all my limbs and bites my heart

Like a dividing dart :

O'er me a cloud from sooty Acheron creeps,

That both mine eyelids heaps

With gloomy horror and infernal night,

Quenching in darkness of the nether deeps

Joy's soon-confounded light.

O dread and wise Prophetic Powers,

Whose strong-compelling law

Doth hold in awe

The labouring hours,

Your intervention I invoke,

My soul from strangling doubts to save ;

Whether you have

Your dwelling in some dark oracular cave,

Or solemn, sacred oak,

Whose shadowy boughs above

Sat the wise dove

With swarthy wing, flown out of Thebes, and told

By sovran Zeus of time and fate to teach

The minds of men, and mysteries manifold,

In dim Dodona's ancient honour'd grove ;

Or if the tuneful voice of old

Awake in Delos, to unfold

Dark wisdom, guarded by ambiguous speech ;

Where, from the blighted beach

Of earth's hail-beaten Hyperborean shore,

The mystic maidens bore

The mighty Images, and round them wove

The wheaten straw, supine on cloudy mountains cold,
In streaming vapour roll'd ;
Whom yet with locks of hair
Shorn for their sepulchres,
And sea-bank myrtle boughs for ever fair
That round their shrines do gleam
When all the woods are bare,
The simple islanders
Yearly adore. O dread and wise, where'er
Ye dwell, that can declare
Things hidden, hasten to the need extreme
Of this distracted hour ! our hopes repair,
Resolve our doubts, and show what Fate doth scheme !
For on the dizzy verge of steep despair
Our spirits struggle, and to ourselves we seem
Like men that, dreaming, know indeed they dream,
But yet from slumber cannot cast out care,
Harrowing the ominous air
With sorrowful breath.
Above, beneath,
Now doth the intense abysmal silence teem
With soul-dismaying terrors. O declare
What dismal deed doth Fate prepare ?
What hidden, horrible thing is hatching there
Behind disastrous doors
Close shut on deathful Treason-trodden floors
Of secret chambers, where
Of some strange horror hid my heart is half aware ?

XV. CLYTEMNESTRA. CASSANDRA. CHORUS.

Clytemnestra. One blow makes all sure. Ay, but
then—beyond?

I cannot trammel up the future thus,
And so forecast the time, as with one blow
To break the hundred Hydra-heads of Chance.
Beyond—beyond I dare not look. For who,
If first he scann'd the space, would leap the gulf?
One blow secures the moment. Oh, but he . . .
Ay, there it lies! I dread lest my love, being
So much the stronger, scare his own to death;
As what they comprehend not, men abhor.
He has a wavering nature, easily
Unpois'd; and trembling ever on extremes.
Oh, what if terror outweigh love, and love,
Having defiled his countenance, take part
Against himself, self-loathed, a fallen god?
Ah, his was never yet the loving soul,
But rather that which lets itself be loved;
As some loose lily leans upon a lake,
Letting the lymph reflect it, as it will,
Still idly sway'd, whichever way the stream
Stirs the green tangles of the water-moss.
The flower of his love never bloom'd upright:—
But a sweet parasite, that loved to lean
On stronger natures, winning strength from them—
Not such a flower as whose delirious cup
Maddens the bee, and never can give forth
Enough of fragrance, yet is ever sweet.
Yet which is sweetest—to receive or give?

Sweet to receive, and sweet to give, in love !
When one is never sated that receives,
Nor ever all exhausted one that gives.
I think I love him more, that I resemble
So little aught that pleases me in him.
Perchance, if I dared question this dark heart,
'Tis not for him, but for myself in him,
For that which is my softer self in him—
I have done this, and this—and shall do more :
Hoped, wept, dared wildly, and will overcome !
Does he not need me ? It is sweet to think
That I am all to him, whate'er I be
To others ; and to one—little, I know !
But to him, all things—sceptre, sword, and crown !
For who would live, but to be loved by some one ?
Be fair, but to give beauty to another ?
Or wise, but to instruct some sweet desire ?
Or strong, but that thereby love may rejoice ?
Or who for crime's sake would be criminal ?
And yet for love's sake would not dare wild deeds ?
A mutual necessity, one fear,
One hope, and the strange posture of the time
Unite us now ;—but this need over-past,
Oh, if, 'twixt his embrace and mine, there rise
The reflex of a murder'd head ! and he,
Remembering the crime, remember not
It was for him that I am criminal,
But rather hate me for the part he took—
Against his soul, as he will say—in this ?—
I will not think it. Upon this wild venture,
Freighted with love's last wealthiest merchandise,
My heart sets forth. To-morrow I shall wake

A beggar, as it may be, or thrice rich.
 As one who plucks his last gem from his crown
 (Some pearl for which, in youth, he barter'd states)
 And, sacrificing with an anxious heart,
 Toward night puts seaward in a little bark
 For lands reported far beyond the sun,
 Trusting to win back kingdoms, or there drown—
 So I—and with like perilous endeavour!
 Oh, but I think I could implore the Gods
 More fervently than ever, in my youth,
 I pray'd that help of Heaven I needed not,
 And lifted innocent hands to their great sky.
 So much to lose . . . so much to gain . . . so much . . .
 I dare not think how

Ha, the Phrygian slave!

He dares to bring his mistress to the hearth!
 She looks unhappy. I will speak to her.
 Perchance her hatred may approve my own,
 And help me in the work I am about.
 'Twere well to sound her.

Be not so cast down,
 Unhappy stranger! Fear no jealous hand.
 In sorrow I, too, am not all untried.
 Our fortunes are not so dissimilar:
 Slaves both—and of one master.

Nay, approach!

Is my voice harsh in its appeal to thee?
 If so, believe me, it belies my heart.
 A woman speaks to thee.

What, silent still?

O look not on me with such sullen eyes,
 There is no accusation in my own.

Rather on him that brought thee, than on thee,
Our scorn is settled. I would help thee. Come!
Mute still?

I know that shame is ever dumb,
And ever weak; but here is no reproach.
Listen! Thy fate is given to thy hands.
Art thou a woman, and dost scorn contempt?
Art thou a captive, and dost loathe these bonds?
Art thou courageous, as men call thy race?
Or, helpless art thou, and wouldst overcome?
If so—look up! For there is hope for thee.
Give me thy hand—

Cassandra. Pah! there is blood on it!

Clytemnestra. What is she raving of?

Cassandra. The place, from old,
Is evil.

Clytemnestra. Ay, there is a sickness, here,
That needs the knife.

Cassandra. Oh, horrible! blood! blood!

Clytemnestra. I see you are a Phrygian to the
bone!

Coward, and slave! be so for evermore!

Cassandra. Apollo! O Apollo! O blood! blood!
The whole place swims with it! The slippery steps
Steam with the fumes! The rank air smells of blood!

Clytemnestra. Heed her not! for she knows not
what she says.

This is some falling sickness of the soul.
Her fever frights itself.

Cassandra. It reeks! it reeks!
It smokes! it stifles! blood! blood, everywhere!

Clytemnestra. See, he hath brought this mad
woman from Troy,
To shame our honour, and insult our care.
Look to her, friends, my hands have other work !

Chorus. Alas, the House of Tantalus is doom'd !

Clytemnestra. The King sleeps—like an infant.

His huge strength
Holds slumber thrice as close as other men.
How well he sleeps ! Make garlands for the gods.
I go to watch the couch. Cull every flower,
And honour all the tutelary faes
With sacrifice as ample as our joy,
Lest some one say we reverence not the gods !

Chorus. O doomèd House and race !

O toilsome, toilsome horsemanship
Of Pelops ; that ill omen brought to us !
For since the drownèd Myrtilus
Did from his golden chariot slip
To his last sleep, below the deep,
Nothing of sad calamitous disgrace
Hath angry Heaven ceased to heap
On this unhappy House of Tantalus.

Not only upon sacred leaves of old,
Preserved in many a guarded, mystic fold,
But sometimes, too, enroll'd
On tablets fair
Of stone, or brass, with quaint and curious care,
In characters of gold,
The wisdom of the wise is writ ;
And hardly shall a man,
For all he can,

By painful, slow degrees,
And nightly reveries
Of long, laborious thought, grow learn'd in these.
But who, that in the wily eye
Of a woman seeks to pry,
Shall say what evil lurks in it?
Or fathom her false wit?
Such tender-cruel treachery
Inhabits there,
And, falsely fair,
In lying light doth softly smiling sit.
For by a woman fell the man
Who did Nemæa's pest destroy,
And the brinded Hydra slew,
And many other wonders wrought.
By a woman, fated Troy
Was overset, and fell to nought.
Royal Amphiaraus, too,
All his wisdom could not free
From his false Eriphyle,
Whom a golden necklace bought—
So hath it been, and so shall be,
Ever since the world began!

O woman, woman, of what other earth
Hath dædal Nature moulded thee?
Thou art not of our clay compact,
Not of our common clay;—
But when the painful world in labour lay—
Labour long—and agony, •
In her heaving throes distract,
And vex with angry Heaven's red ire,

Nature, kneading snow and fire, t
In thy mystic being pent
Each contrary element ;
Life and death within thee blent ;
All despair and all desire ;
There to mingle and ferment.
While, mad midwives, at thy birth
Furies mixt with Sirens bent,
Inter-wreathing snakes and smiles—
Fairest dreams and falsest guiles !

Such a splendid mischief thou !
With thy light of languid eyes :
And thy bosom of pure snow :
And thine heart of fire below,
Whose red light doth come and go
Ever o'er thy changeful cheek
When love-whispers tremble weak :
Thy warm lips and pensive sighs,
That the breathless spirit bow :
And the heavenward life that lies
In the still serenities
Of thy snowy, airy brow—
Thine ethereal airy brow.
Such a splendid mischief, thou !
What are all thy witcheries ?
All thine evil beauty ? all
Thy soft looks, and subtle smiles ?
Tangled tresses ? mad caresses ?
Tendernesses ? tears and kisses ?
And the long look, between whiles
That the helpless heart beguiles,

Tranced in such a subtle thrall?
 What are all thy sighs and smiles?
 Fairest dreams and falsest guiles!
 Hoofs to horses, teeth to lions,
 Horns to bulls, and speed to hares,
 To the fish to glide through waters,
 To the bird to glide through airs,
 Nature gave: to men gave courage,
 And the use of brazen spears.
 What was left to give to woman,
 All her gifts thus given? Ah, tears,
 Smiles, and kisses, whispers, glances,
 Only these; and merely beauty
 On her archèd brows unfurl'd.
 And with these she shatters lances,
 All unarm'd binds armèd Duty,
 And in triumph drags the world!

XVI. SEMI-CHORUS. CHORUS. CASSANDRA. AGA-
 MEMNON. CLYTEMNESTRA. ÆGISTHUS.

Semi-chorus. Break off, break off! It seems I
 heard a cry!

Chorus. Surely one call'd within the house.

Semi-chorus. Stand by.

Chorus. The Prophetess is troubled. Look, her eye
 Rolls fearfully.

Semi-chorus. Now all is husht once more.

Chorus. I hear the feet of some one at the door.

(*Agamemnon, within.*) Murdress! oh, oh!

Semi-chorus. The house is fill'd with shrieks.

Chorus. The sound deceives or that was the King's
 voice.

Semi-chorus. The voice of Agamemnon !

(*Agamemnon, within.*) Ai ! ai ! ai !

Cassandra. The bull is in the toils.

(*Agamemnon, within.*) I will not die !

(*Ægisthus, within.*) O Zeus ! he will escape !

(*Clytemnestra, within.*) He has it.

(*Agamemnon, within.*) Ai ! ai !

Chorus. Some hideous deed is being done within.

Burst in the doors !

Semi-chorus. I cannot open them.

Barr'd, barr'd within !

Cassandra. The axe is at the bull !

Chorus. Call the elders.

Semi-ch. And the People. O Argives ! Argives !

Ailinos ! ailinos !

Chorus. You to the Agora.

Semi-chorus. To the temples we.

Chorus. Hearken, O maidens !

Semi-chorus. This way.

Chorus. That way.

Semi-chorus. Quick ! quick !

Cassandra. Seal my sight, O Apollo ! O Apollo !

Chorus. To the Agora !

Semi-chorus. To the temples !

Chorus. Haste ! haste !

(*Agamemnon, within.*) Stabb'd, oh !

Chorus. Too late !

Cassandra. The bull is bellowing.

(*Ægisthus, within.*) Thrust there again !

(*Clytemnestra, within.*) One blow has done it all.

(*Ægisthus, within.*) Is it quite through ?

(*Clytemnestra, within.*) He will not move again.

Semi-chorus. O Heaven, and Earth ! My heart
stands still with awe !

Where will this murder end ?

Chorus.

Hold ! some one comes !

XVII. ELECTRA. ORESTES. CHORUS. A PHOCIAN.

(*Electra leading Orestes.*) Save us ! save him—
Orestes !

Chorus. What has fall'n ?

Electra. An evil thing. Oh, we are fatherless !

Chorus. Ill-starr'd Electra ! But how fell this
chance ?

Electra. Here is no time for words—scarce time
for flight.

When from his royal bath the King would rise—
That devilish woman, lying long in lurk,
Behind him crept, with stealthy feet unheard,
And flung o'er all his limbs a subtle web.
Caught in the craft of whose contriv'd folds,
Stumbling, he fell. Ægisthus seized a sword ;
But halted, half irresolute to strike.
My father, like a lion in the toils,
Upheaved his head, and, writhing, roar'd with wrath,
And angry shame at this infernal snare.
Almost he rent the blinding nets atwain.
But Clytemnestra on him flung herself,
And caught the steel, and smit him through the ribs.
He slipp'd, and reel'd. She drove the weapon through,
Piercing the heart.

Chorus. O woe ! what tale is this ?

Elec. I, too, with him, had died, but for this child,

And that high vengeance which is yet to be.

Chorus. Alas ! then Agamemnon is no more,
 Who stood, but now, amongst us, full of life,
 Crown'd with achieving years ! The roof and cope
 Of honour, fall'n ! Where shall we lift our eyes ?
 Where set renown ? Where garner up our hopes ?
 All worth is dying out. The land is dark,
 And Treason walks abroad in the eclipse.
 He did not die the death of men that live
 Such life as he lived, fall'n among his peers,
 Whom the red battle roll'd away, while yet
 The shout of gods was ringing through and through
 them ;

But Death, that fear'd to front him in full field,
 Lurk'd by the hearth and smote him from behind.
 A mighty man is gone. A mighty grief
 Remains. And rumour of undying deeds
 For song, and legend, to the end of time !
 What tower is strong ?

Electra. O friends—if friends you be—
 For who shall say where falsehood festers not,
 Those being falsest, who should most be true ?
 Where is that Phocian ? Let him take the boy,
 And bear him with him to his master's court.
 Else will Ægisthus slay him.

Chorus. Orphan'd one,
 Fear you not ?

Orestes. I am Agamemnon's son.

Chorus. Therefore shouldst fear—

Orestes. And therefore cannot fear.

Phocian. I heard a cry. Did any call ?

Chorus. Oh, well !

You happen this way in the need of time.

Electra. O loyal stranger, Agamemnon's child
Is fatherless. This boy appeals to you.

O save him, save him from his father's foes !

Pho. Unhappy lady, what wild words are these ?

Elec. The house runs blood. Ægisthus, like a fiend,
Is raging loose, his weapon dripping gore.

Chorus. The King is dead.

Phocian. Is dead !

Electra. Dead.

Phocian. Do I dream ?

Electra. Such dreams are dream'd in hell—such
dreams—oh no !

Is not the earth as solid—heaven above—

The sun in heaven—and Nature at her work—

And men at theirs—the same ? Oh, no ! no dream !

We shall not wake—nor he ; though the gods sleep !

Unnaturally murder'd—

Phocian. Murder'd !

Electra. Ay.

And the sun blackens not ; the world holds fast ;

The fires of the red west are not put out.

Is not the cricket singing in the grass ?

And the shy lizard shooting through the leaves ?

I hear the ox low in the labour'd field.

Those swallows build, and are as garrulous

High up i' the towers. Yet I speak the truth !

By heaven, I speak the truth—

Phocian. Yet more, vouchsafe.

How died the King ?

Electra. Oh, there shall be a time

For words hereafter. While we dally here,

Fate hunts and hounds us. Friend, receive this boy.
 Bear him to Strophius. All this tragedy
 Relate as best you may; it beggars speech.
 Tell him a tower of hope is fall'n this day—
 A name in Greece—

Phocian. —But you—

Electra. Away! away!

Destruction posts apace, while we delay.

Phocian. Come then!

Electra. I dare not leave my father's hearth,
 For who would then do honour to his urn?
 It may be that my womanhood and youth
 May help me here. It may be I shall fall,
 And mix my own with Agamemnon's blood.
 No matter. On Orestes hangs the hope
 Of all this House. Him save for better days,
 And ripen'd vengeance.

Phocian. Noble-hearted one!
 Come then, last offering of this fated race.
 The future calls thee!

Orestes. Sister! Sister!

Electra. Go!

Orestes. O sister!

Electra. O my brother! . . . One last kiss—
 One last long kiss—how I have loved thee, boy!
 Was it for this I nourish'd thy young years
 With stately tales, and legends of the gods?
 For this? . . . How the past crowds upon me! Ah—
 Wilt thou recall, in lonely, lonely hours,
 How once we sat together on still eves
 (Ah me!) and brooded on all serious themes
 Of sweet, and high, and beautiful, and good,

That throng the ancient years. Alcmena's son,
And how his life went out in fire on Ceta ;
Or of that bright-hair'd wanderer after fame,
That brought the great gold-fleece across the sea,
And left a name in Colchis ; or we spake
Of the wise Theseus, councils, kingdoms, thrones,
And laws in distant lands ; or, later still,
Of the great leaguer set round Ilion,
And what heart-stirring tidings of the war
Bards brought to Hellas. But when I would breathe
Thy father's name, didst thou not grasp my hand,
And glorious deeds shone round us like the stars
That lit the dark world from a great way off,
And died up into heaven, among the gods ?

Orestes. Sister, O sister !

Electra.

Ah, too long we linger.

Away ! away !

Phocian. Come !

Chorus.

Heaven go with thee !

To Crissa points the hand of Destiny.

Elec. O boy, on thee Fate hangs an awful weight
Of retribution ! Let thy father's ghost
For ever whisper in thine ear. Be strong.
About thee, yet unborn, thy mother wove
The mystic web of life in such-like form
That Agamemnon's spirit in thine eyes
Seems living yet. His seal is set on thee ;
And Pelops' ivory shoulder marks thee his.
Thee, child, nor contests on the Isthmian plain,
Nor sacred apple, nor green laurel-leaf,
But graver deeds await. Forget not, son,
Whose blood, unwash'd, defiles thy mother's doors !

Chorus. O haste! I hear a sound within the house.

Electra. Farewell, then, son of Agamemnon!

Phocian. Come!

XVIII. ELECTRA. CHORUS. ÆGISTHUS.

Electra. Gone! gone! Ah saved! . . . Oh fool, thou missest, here!

Chorus. Alas, Electra, whither wilt thou go?

Electra. Touch me not! Come not near me!
Let me be!

For this day, which I hoped for, is not mine.

Chor. See how she gathers round her all her robe.
And sits apart with grief. Oh, can it be
Great Agamemnon is among the shades?

Electra. Would I had grasp'd his skirt, and follow'd him!

Chorus. Alas! there is an eminence of joy,
Where Fate grows dizzy, being mounted there,
And so tilts over on the other side!

O fallen, O fallen

The tower which stood so high!

Whose base and girth were strong i' the earth,

Whose head was in the sky!

O fall'n that tower of noble power,

That fill'd up every eye!

He stood so sure, that noble tower!

To make secure, and fill with power,

From length to length, the land of Greece!

In whose strong bulwarks all men saw,

Garner'd on the lap of law,
For dearth, or danger, spears of war,
And harvest sheaves of peace !
O fall'n, O fall'n that lofty tower—
The loftiest tower in Greece !

His brows he lift above the noon,
Fill'd with the day, a noble tower !
Who took the sunshine, and the shower,
And flung them back in merry scorn.
Who now shall stand when tempests lower?
He was the first to catch the morn,
The last to see the moon.
O friends, he was a noble tower !
O friends, and fall'n so soon !

Ah, well ! lament ! lament !
His walls are rent, his bulwarks bent,
And stoop'd that crested eminence,
Which stood so high for our defence !
For our defence—to guard, and fence
From all alarm of hurt and harm,
The fulness of a land's content !
O fall'n away, fall'n at mid-day,
And set before the sun is down,
The highest height of our renown !
O overthrown, the ivory throne !
The spoils of war, the golden crown,
And chiefest honour of the state !
O mourn with me ! what tower is free
From over-topping destiny ?
What strength is strong to fate ?

O mourn with me ! when shall we see

Another such, so good, so great ?

Another such, to guard the state ?

Ægisthus. He should have staid to shout through
Troy, or bellow

With bulls in Ida—

Chorus. Look ! *Ægisthus* comes !

Like some lean tiger, having dipt in blood

His dripping fangs, and hot athirst for more.

His lurid eye-ball rolls, as though it swam

Through sanguine films. He staggers, drunk with rage

And crazy mischief.

Ægisthus. Hold ! let no one stir !

I charge you, all of you, who hear me speak.

Where may the boy *Orestes* lie conceal'd ?

I hold the life of each in gage for his.

If any know where now he hides from us,

Let him beware, not rendering true reply !

Chorus. The boy is fled—

Electra.

—is saved !

Ægisthus.

Electra here !

How mean you ? What is this ?

Electra.

Enough is left

Of *Agamemnon's* blood to drown you in.

Ægisthus. You shall not trifle with me, by my
beard !

There's peril in this pastime. Where's the boy ?

Electra. Halfway to *Phocis*, Heaven helping him.

Ægisthus. By the black *Styx* !

Electra.

Take not the oath of gods,

Who art but half a man, blaspheming coward !

Ægisthus. But you, by Heaven, if this be a sword,

Shall not be any more—

Electra. —A slave to thee,
Blundering bloodshedder, though thou boast thyself
As huge as Ossa piled on Pelion,
Or anything but that weak wretch thou art !
Oh, thou hast only half done thy black work !
Thou should'st have slain the young lion with the old.
Look that he come not back, and find himself
Ungiven food, and still the lion's share !

Ægisthus. Insolent ! but I know to seal thy lips—

Electra. —For thou art only strong among the
weak.

We know thou hast an aptitude for blood.
To take a woman's is an easy task,
And one well worthy thee.

Ægisthus. Oh, but for words !

Electra. Yet, could'st thou feed on all the noble
blood

Of god-like generations on this earth,
It should not help thee to a hero's heart.

Chorus. O peace, Electra, but for pity's sake !
Heap not his madness to such dangerous heights.

Electra. I will speak out my heart's scorn, though
I die.

Ægisthus. And thou shalt die, but not till I have
tamed

That stubborn spirit to a wish for life.

Chorus. O cease, infatuate ! I hear the Queen.

[*By a movement of the Eccyclema the palace is thrown open, and discovers CLYTEMNESTRA standing over the body of AGAMEMNON.*]

XIX. CLYTEMNESTRA. CHORUS. ÆGISTHUS.
ELECTRA.

Clytemnestra. Argives ! behold the man who was
your King !

Chorus. Dead ! dead !

Clytemnestra. Not I, but Fate hath dealt
this blow.

Chorus. Dead ! dead, alas ! look where he lies, O
friends !

That noble head, and to be brought so low !

Clytemnestra. He who set light by woman, with
blind scorn,

And held her with the beasts we sacrifice,

Lies, by a woman sacrificed himself.

This is high justice which appeals to you.

Chorus. Alas ! alas ! I know not words for this !

Clytemnestra. We are but as the instrument of
heaven.

Our work is not design, but destiny.

A God directs the lightning to its fall ;

It smites and slays, and passes other-where,

Pure in its self, as when, in light, it left

The bosom of Olympus, to its end.

In this cold heart the wrong of all the past

Lies buried. I avenged, and I forgive.

Honour him yet. He is a king, though fallen.

Chorus. Oh, how she sets Virtue's own crest on
Crime,

And stands there stern as Fate's wild arbitress !

Not any deed could make her less than great.

(CLYTEMNESTRA descends the steps, and lays her hand
on the arm of ÆGISTHUS.)

Clytemnestra. Put up thy sword! Enough of blood is spilt.

Ægisthus. Hist! Oh, not half—Orestes is escaped.

Clytemnestra. Sufficient for the future be that thought.

What's done is well done. What's undone—yet more: Some thing still saved from crime.

Ægisthus. This lion's whelp
Will work some mischief yet.

Clytemnestra. He is a child—
—Our own—we will but war upon the strong,
Not upon infants. Let this matter rest.

Ægisthus. Oh, ever, in the wake of thy great will
Let me steer sure! and we will leave behind
Great tracks of light upon the wondering world.
If but you err not here—

Clytemnestra. These pale-eyed groups!
See how they huddle shuddering, and stand round;
As when some mighty beast, the brindled lord
Of the rough woodside, sends his wild death-roar
Up the shrill caves, the meaner denizens
Of ancient woods, shy deer, and timorous hares,
Peer from the hairy thickets, and shrink back.
We fear'd the lion, and we smote him down.
Now fear is over. Shall we turn aside
To harry jackalls? Laugh! we have not laugh'd
So long, I think you have forgotten how!
Have we no right to laugh like other men?
Ha! ha! I laugh. Now it is time to laugh!

Chorus. O awful sight! Look where the bloody sun,
As though with Agamemnon he were slain,
Runs reeking, lurid, down the palace floors!

Clytemnestra. O my beloved! Now will we reign
 sublime,
 And set our foot upon the neck of Fortune!
 And, for the rest—oh, much remains!—For you
(To the Chorus)

A milder sway, if mildly you submit
 To our free service and supremacy.
 Nor tax, nor toll, to carry dim results
 Of distant war beyond the perilous seas.
 But gateless justice in our halls of state,
 And peace in all the borders of our land!
 For you—

(To ELECTRA, who has thrown herself upon the body of
 AGAMEMNON).

Electra. Oh, hush! What more remains to me,
 But this dead hand, whose clasp is cold in mine?
 And all the baffled memory of the past,
 Buried with him? What more!

Clytemnestra. —A mother's heart,
 If you will come to it. Free confidence.
 A liberal share in all our future hope.
 Now, more than ever—mutually weak—
 We stand in need, each of the other's love.
 Our love! it shall not sacrifice thee, child,
 To wanton whims of war, as he, of old,
 Did thy dead sister. If you will not these,
 But answer love with scorn, why then—

Electra. —What then?

Clytemnestra. Safe silence. And permission to
 forget.

**XX. CHORUS. SEMI-CHORUS. CLYTEMNESTRA.
CASSANDRA. ÆGISTHUS.**

Chorus. What shall we say? What has been
done?

Shed no tear! Oh, shed no tear!
Hang up his harness in the sun;
The hookèd car, and barbèd spear;
And all war's adamantine gear
Of trophied spoils; for all his toils
Are over, alas! are over, and done!
What shall we say? what has been done?
Shed no tear! Oh, shed no tear!
But keep solemn silence all,
As befits when heroes fall;
Solemn as his fame is; sad
As his end was; earth shall wear
Mourning for him. See, the sun
Blushes red for what is done!
And the wild stars, one by one,
Peer out of the lurid air,
And shrink back with awe, and fear,
Shuddering, for what is done.
When the night comes, dark and dun,
As our sorrow; blackness far
Shutting out the crimson sun;
Turn his face to the moon, and star,—
These are bright as his glories are—
And great Heaven shall see its son!
What shall we say? what has been done?
Shed no tear! oh, shed no tear!

Gather round him, friends! Look here!
 All the wreaths which he hath won
 In the race that he hath run—
 Laurel garlands, every one!
 These are things to think upon,
 Mourning till the set of sun—
 Till the mourning moon appear.
 Now the wreaths which Fame begun
 To uplift, to crown his head,
 Memory shall seize upon,
 And make chaplets for his bier.
 He shall have wreaths though he be dead!
 But his monument is here,
 Built up in our hearts, and dear
 To all honour. Shed no tear!
 Oh, let not any tear be shed!

Semi-chorus. Look at Cassandra! she is stooping
 down.

Semi-chorus. She dips and moves her fingers in
 the blood!

Semi-chorus. Look to her! There's a wildness
 in her eye!

Semi-chorus. What does she?

Semi-chorus. Oh, in Agamemnon's blood
 She hath writ *Orestes* on the palace steps!

Clytemnestra. Ægisthus!

Ægisthus. Queen and bride!

Clytemnestra. We have not fail'd.

Chorus. Come, venerable, ancient Night!
 From sources of the western stars,
 In darkest shade that fits this woe.
 Consoler of a thousand griefs,

And likest death unalterably calm.
We toil, aspire, and sorrow,
And in a little while shall cease.
For we know not whence we came,
And who can ensure the morrow ?
Thou, eternally the same,
From of old, in endless peace
Eternally survivest ;
Enduring on through good and ill,
Coëval with the Gods ; and still
In thine own silence livest.
Our days thou ledest home
To the great Whither which has no Again !
Impartially to pleasure and to pain
Thou sett'st the bourne. To thee shall all things come.

Clytemnestra. But, if he cease to love me, what is
gain'd ?

Cassandra. With wings darkly spreading,
Like ravens to the carcass
Scenting far off the savour of blood,
From shores of the unutterable River,
They gather and swoop,
• They waver, they darken.
From the fangs that raven,
From the eyes that glare
Intolerably fierce,
Save me, Apollo !
Ai ! Ai ! Ai !
Ailino ! Ailino !
Blood, blood ! and of kindred nature,
Which the young wolf returning
Shall dip his fangs in,

Thereby accursedly
Imbibing madness !

Chorus. The wild woman is uttering strange things
Fearful to listen to.

Clytemnestra. Within the House
Straightway confine her,
There to learn wisdom.

Ægisthus. Orestes—oh, this child's life now out-
weighs

That mighty ruin, Agamemnon dead !

Clytemnestra. *Ægisthus*, dost thou love me ?

Ægisthus.

Ay.

Clytemnestra.

Our lives,

Henceforth, are one, for evermore.

Ægisthus.

I know it.

Clytemnestra. I am all thine—

Ægisthus.

I know it.

Clytemnestra.

Thou all mine—

Ægisthus. Ay. Art thou happy ?

Clytemnestra.

If thou lovest me, yes.

Say thou dost love me still.

Ægisthus.

I love thee still.

Clytemnestra. That's coldly answer'd, that was
hotly ask'd.

Yet love me still, dear love, I love thee more.

Ægisthus. That life was in him, should, I think,
have made

His days outnumber ours.

Clytemnestra.

Think not on this.

Ægisthus. Ay. It is nothing now.

Clytemnestra.

Which leaves us much.

Life's much, and love is more.

Ægisthus.

For we must die.

We too. All passes, and must pass away.
 There's nothing certain in man's life but this
 That he must lose it. Every hour's a thief,
 And all the world's unstable. Who's assured
 The sun will rise to-morrow? Each man stands
 Poised on this little pinnacle of time
 The ever-crumbling moment, eminent
 In midst of such innumerable mischance
 That nothing is, or is conceivable,
 Of strength or size so insignificant
 But what it may upset him! None is safe,
 Sleeping or waking. And between us all
 And what shall be the end of us at last
 There's nothing but our ignorance of it.

Clytemnestra. Be thankful therefore for what is :
 nor make

What is not worse than though it were indeed,
 By fearing it, *Ægisthus*.

Ægisthus.

Yet although

We lay our lives within each other's arms
 Sleeping, there is no certainty in this :
 For he that's slain so trusted both of us
 As we must trust each other, we that slew him.

Clytemnestra. Then, as I trust thee, trust me also.

Ægisthus.

Ay.

Clytemnestra. Come. Open Hymen's honour'd
 hand shall bear

Conspicuous now our spousal torch. For he
 That stood between us being no more to fear,
 Our love is free, beloved *Ægisthus*.

Ægisthus.

Free !

Chorus. Only Heaven is high. •
Only the Gods are great.
Above the searchless sky,
In unremovèd state ;
They from their golden mansions,
Look over the lands, and the seas ;
The ocean's wide expansions,
And the earth's varieties :
Secure of their supremacy,
And sure of affluent ease.
Who shall say " I stand !" nor fall ?
Destiny is over all !
Rust will crumble old renown.
Bust and column tumble down ;
Keep, and castle ; tower, and town ;
Throne, and sceptre ; crest, and crown.
Destiny is over all !
One by one, the pale guests fall
At lighted feast, in palace hall ;
And feast is turn'd to funeral.
Who shall say " I stand !" nor fall ?
Destiny is over all !

LYRICAL.

PART I.

LINES.

BECAUSE she hath the sweetest eyes,
The bluest, truest,—and more wise
Than woodland violets wild in wood
To make wholesome the earth, and good ;
Because she hath such glad gold hair
That nothing in the laughing air
Of the lusty May, at morn,
When all that's bright and glad is born,
Ever was so glad and bright ;
And, therewith, a hand more white
And warm than is the warmed coat
Of whiteness round a meek dove's throat.
Yet withal so calm, so pure,
No ill passion may endure
That serenest hand's chaste touch :
And because my love is such
That I do not dare to speak
Of the changes on her cheek,
Which the sunrise and sunset

Of her luminous thoughts beget,
Nor of her rose-sweet mouth, that is
Too sweet to kiss, or not to kiss,
'Tis aye so sweet and savorous ;
And because (to comfort us
For what throbbings of sweet pain
Come, and go, and come again,
Till the wishful sense be full,
Gazing on aught so beautiful)
Such innocent wise ways she knoweth.
And so good is all she doeth,—
All she is,—so simple, fair,
Joyous, just, and debonair,
That there is none so ignorant
Of worship, nor with soul so scant
Of visitations from above,
But, seeing her, he needs must love,
And purely love, her,—and for this,
Love better everything that is ;—

Therefore now, my Songs, will I
That ye into her presence hie,
Flying over land and sea,
Many an one, that sever me
From the sweet thing that hath the sleeping
Joy of my shut heart in keeping.
But, that when ye hence be gone
Into the bounteous region
Of that bright land over sea
Wherein so many sweet things be,
Where my Lady aye doth dwell,

Ye her dwelling dear may tell,
Nor its special sweetness miss
In midst of many sweetnesses ;
Yet awhile, my Songs, delay
Till I have told ye, as I may,
All the fairness of the place
That is familiar with the grace
And glory of my Lady's face.

And (so shall ye know that she
Dwelleth in loftier light than we,
As intimate with skyey things
As are creatures that have wings)
Being come to mountains seven,
Note that one that's nighest heaven :
Thereon lieth against the sun
A place of pleasaunce, all o'er-run
With whisperous shade, and blossoming
Of divers trees, wherein do sing
The little birds, and all together,
All day long in happy weather.
And well I ween that since the birth
Of Adam's firstborn, not on earth
Hath ever been such sweet singing
Of bird on bough, as here doth bring
Into a large and leafy case
His sense that strayeth among the trees,
Where mingled is full many a note
Of golden-finch and speckle-throat.
Even the hoarse-chested starling
Here, where creepeth never a snarling
Gust to vex his heart, all day

LYRICAL.

Learneth a more melodious lay .
Than that whereby this bird is known,
Which, otherwhere, with chiding tone,
What time the fretful Spring doth heave
The frozen North, to winds, that grieve
Round about the grave of March,
He chaunteth from the cloudy larch :
The linnet loud, and throstle eke,
And the blackbird of golden beak,
With perpetual madrigals
Do melodize the warm green walls
Of those blossom-crownèd groves,
In whose cool hearts the cooing doves
Make murmurings innumerable,
Of sound as sweet as when a well
With noise of bubbled water leapeth
At a green couch where Silence sleepeth :
Nor less, the long-voiced nightingale
Doth, deep down in bloomy vale
Delicious, pour at full noonlight
The song he hath rehearsed o'er-night ;
And many other birds be there
Of most sweet voice, and plumage rare,
And names that I not know. Of trees
That spring therein such plenty is
That I to tell them over all
Encumber'd am. Both maple tall
There showeth his silver-mottled bark ;
And beeches, colour'd like the dark
Red wine o' the South ; and laurels green,
Sunny and smooth, that make rich screen
Round mossy places, where all day

Red squirrels and gray conies play,
Munching brown nuts and such wild fare
As tumbleth from the branches there.
And, for moisture of sweet showers,
All the grass is thick with flowers ;
Primrose pure, that cometh alone ;
Daisies quaint, with savour none,
But golden eyes of great delight
That all men love, they be so bright ;
And, cold in grassy cloister set,
Many a maiden violet ;
The bramble flower, the scarlet hepe,
Hangeth above in sunny sleep,
And all around be knots and rows
Of tufted thyme, and lips of cows ;
Whose sweet savour goeth about
The jocund bowers, in and out,
And dieth over all the place ;
So that there is not any space
Of sun or shade, but haunted is
With ghosts of many sweetnesses.
There, dreading no intrusive stroke
Of lifted axe, the lusty oak
Broad his branches brown doth fling,
And reigneth, " every inch a king :"
Him also of that other kind
In great plenty shall ye find,
That while the great year goeth around
Sheddeth never his leaves to ground,
But in himself his summer hath,
And oweth not, nor borroweth,
As (though but rare) there be some wise

LYRICAL.

Good men, that to themselves suffice ;
But in northern land we see
Full few, and they but stunted be,
Of this goodly kind of tree.
The ever-trembling birch, through all
Her hoary lights ethereal,
Doth twinkle there, twixt green and gray ;
And of fruit-trees is great array :
The apple and the pear tree both,
Smother'd o'er in creamy froth
Of bubbled blossoms ; the green fig,
With leathern leaves, and horny twig,
And gluey globes ; the juniper,
That smelleth sweet in midsummer ;
Nor peach-tree, there, nor apricot,
Needeth either nail or knot ;
Nor there from churlish weathers wince
The orange, lemon, plum, and quince ;
But under these, by grassy slopes,
Hangeth the vine her leafy ropes ;
Wild Proteus she, o' the wanton wood,
That ever shifteth her merry mood,
And, aye in luxury of change,
Loveth to revel, and dance, and range,
In leaves, not hers, she fleeteth through,
Hiding her large grape-bunches blue ;
And here, o'er haunts he maketh brown
With droppings from his scented crown,
Standeth the stately sycamore
Lifting airy terrace o'er
Airy terrace ;—such of yore
Dusky masons, deftly skill'd

Mighty stones to pile and build,
 Up-hung in sumptuous Babylon,
 For silken kings at set of sun
 To dally with dark girls ; but these
 Are humm'd about by honey bees,
 And cicale all day long
 Creek the chamber'd shades among.
 Far away, down hills that seem
 Liquid (for the light doth stream
 Through and through them) like that vail
 Of lucid mist Morn spreadeth pale
 O'er Summer's sallow forehead, found
 Somewhere asleep on upland ground
 Under the shade of heavy woods,
 Imaginary multitudes
 Of melancholy olives waste
 Their wanness, smiling half effaced
 In a smooth sea of slumbrous glory ;
 But high on inland promontory
 Blandly the broad-headed pine,
 Basking in the blue divine,
 Drowseth, drench'd with sunny sky :
 And, while the blue needle-fly
 Nimble pricketh in and out
 The leaf-broider'd lawns about
 (As busy she as highborn dame
 In shining silk, at tambour frame),
 The pomegranate, flowering flame,
 Burneth lone in cool retreats,
 Hidden from those gorgeous heats
 Where summer smouldereth into sweets.
 Now, when ye have this goodly wood

All roamèd through, in gamesome mood,
At morning tide, and thereon spent
Large wealth of love and wonderment,
In honour due of such full cheer
And lustihood as laugheth here
The well-bower'd grass about,
That windeth in, and windeth out,
Under those bright ribandings
The red-budded bramble flings
From branch to branch, still straying on
Softly, ye shall be ware anon
Of a fair garden, glad and great,
Where my Lady, in high state
Of beauty, doth twixt eve and noon,
Under a spiritual moon,
Visit full oft her vassal flowers
In silent and sweet-scented hours,
When quiet vast is everywhere,
About the blue benignant air
And the cool grass, a deep immense
Gladness, an undisturbèd sense
Of goodness in the gather'd calm
Of old green woodlands bathed in balm,
And bounteous silence. . . . O my love,
How softly do the sweet hours move
About thy peaceful perfectness !
O hasten, little Songs ! O press
To meet my Lady, ye that be
Her children, if she knew ! . . . But she
Still lingereth, and the silver dawn
Is silent on the unfooted lawn.
Here all day doth couch and sport

Trim Flora, with her florid court :
 Roses that be illuminèd
 With royal colour rich and red ;
 Some, with bosoms open wide,
 Where the brown bee, undenied,
 Drinketh deep of honey drops ;
 Others, whose enamell'd knops
 Prettily do peep between
 Their half-bursten cradles green ;
 Lordly lilies, pale and proud ;
 And of all flowers a great crowd ;
 Whose rare-colour'd kirtles show
 More hues than of the rainy bow.
 In sweet warmth and lucid air
 Nod they all and whisper, where
 Lightly along each leafy lane
 Zephyrus, with his tripping train,
 Cometh at cool of even hour
 To greet in all her pomp and power
 Queen Flora, when in mansions damp
 Of the dim moss his spousal lamp
 Aloof the enamour'd glow-worm doth
 Softly kindle ; while the moth
 Flitteth ; and, at elfin rites,
 Sprucely dance the little Sprites
 Under the young moon all alone,
 Round about King Oberon.
 But ye this pleasaunce fair shall reach
 Ere yet from off the slanted peach
 The drops of silver dew be slipp'd,
 Or night-born buds be open-lipp'd.
 There shall ye find, in lustrous shade

Of laurels cool, an old well-head ,
That whelmeth up from under-ground,
And falleth with a tinkling sound
In a broad basin, basèd there,
All rose-porphry, smooth and fair.
The water is ever fresh and new,
As that Narcissus gazed into,
When, for love of his sweet self,
He fainted from the flowery shelf,
Leaving Echo all that pain ;
So that now there doth remain
Of him that was so fair and sweet
Only in some green retreat
A purple flower seldom found,
And of her a hollow sound
In hollow places. There shall ye
Pause as ye pass, and sing . . “ To thee,
Water, our Master bade us say
Glad be thy heart, and pure alway ;
May thy full urn never fail,
Thee nor sun nor frost assail,
Nor wild winter's wind molest thee,
Never newt nor eft infest thee,
Taint nor trouble touch thee never,
Heaven above thee smile for ever,
Earth around thee ever bear
Beauteous buds and blossoms rare ;
Far from thee be all foul things,
Slaves to thee be all sweet springs,
Because thou, of thy kindness, hast
Shown, in blissful summers past,
To fondest eyes have ever been,

Sweetest face was ever seen :
 Therefore be blest for evermore."
 But if, my Songs, ye would explore
 This pleasaunce all, there be therein
 Delights so many, day would win
 His under-goal ere ye were forth
 Of your much musing on the worth
 That is therein, and wondrous grace :
 Therefore, ere the sun down-pace,
 Must ye onward, where is spread
 A fair terrace ; and overhead
 Thick trellis of the trembling vine,
 That with leaves doth loop and twine
 Airy casements, whence the glance
 Of whoso there, as in a trance,
 Walketh about the whisperous shade
 Under that vaulted verdure laid,
 Seeth far down, and far away,
 Tower'd cities, throng'd and gay,
 Blowing woodlands, bright blue streams
 Sparkling outward, yellow gleams
 Of wavèd corn, and sun-burnt swells
 Of pasture, soothed with sounds of bells
 Sprinkled in air, of various tone,
 From little hill-side chapels lone,
 And peaceful flocks that stray and pass
 Down endless lengths of lowland grass.
 And, certes, I will boldly say
 Of this fair place, let mock who may,
 That of joy the quintessence
 Hath never slept about the sense
 Of mortal man that is to die

With fullness sweet as that which I
Deep in my swoonèd heart have known,
Whilhom walking, not alone,
Here in summer morns and eves
When shadowy showers of flitting leaves
Fell, shaken thick from many a rout
Of little birds that fast flew out
Above us ; interruption sweet
To converse, felt the more complete
For the interposèd pauses
Born of all such innocent causes.

High on the happy lawn above
Standeth the dwelling of my love.
Fair white all the mansion seemeth,
Save where in green shadow dreameth
The broad blossom-buttress'd roof,
Or where the many-colour'd woof
Of honeysuckle and creeping flowers,
Visibly from vernal showers
Winning length, hath broider'd all
With braided buds the southern wall.
Therein many windows be ;
And every window fair to see,
O'er-canopied with hangings bright,
For shelter fresh from summer light.
And underneath, in urns and pots,
Sweet-smelling basil, and red knots
Of roses ripe ; for every casement
Is balconied about at basement,
A space where three or four may sit
At interchange of song or wit,

In the low amber evening hours,
Overlooking lawns and flowers.

In the hall, which is beneath,
A fountain springeth and echoeth,
Blown by a sad-looking Nymph,
Ravisht from her native lymph
And mossy grot, in days of old ;
And in marble mute and cold
Here for ever must she dwell
Uncompanion'd, by the spell
Of a stern old sculptor caught ;
For, aye since then, the hand that wrought
This stony charm her limbs upon
May not undo it. Years are gone,
And still about her doth she stare,
Amazed however she came there.

But ye, since ye be free to reve
This mansion through, to floors above
Up the majestic marble stair
Pass with still steps, unseen, to where
Soon shall ye find, in sequel long,
Twelve great chambers : some be hung
With arras quaint, that doth portray
Hounds that hold the hart at bay
In good green wood, and hunters bold,
And dames a clad in green and gold ;
And evermore their horns be wound,
And evermore there cometh no sound :
Others in glowing fresco tell
Great Caesar's tale, and how he fell

Pierced through and through ; with many a story
Of ancient kings that be in glory,
And high-renowned heroes old ;
Sir Tristram, with his harp of gold,
That rashly drain'd the philtre brew'd
By the witch Queen for fair Isoud ;
Roland in Roncevallès slain ;
And bold Sir Ogier the Dane ;
Huon of Bordeaux, love's true star ;
Saladin with his scimitar ;
The Red-beard Kaiser, sleeping still
Hid in the heart of Salzburg Hill ;
David that danceth round the ark ;
And Charlemagne ; ye there may mark.

But, O my Songs, more softly now,
More softly move ! Breathe low, breathe low !
For, by my heart's most tender fear,
I know that ye must now be near
The place where, nesting meek and warm,
Rosy cheek on snowy arm,
With loos'd hair and lidded eye
Dreaming doth my Lady lie :
And all around the restful air
Is silent, sweet, and pure, as where
Fond hands some holy taper trim,
Peaceful in sacred precincts dim.
Now, that my spirit, though far away
From her loved beauty, night and day
Ever in unreleased pine
Seeking, on many a musèd line,
To flow toward her, purely may

Her pureness praise,—humbly I pray
 Of all good things that wait upon
 The mind that maketh devotion
 To what is fair (since such do lean
 O'er mortal spirits oft unseen
 Out of the deep and starry night,
 Or steal on beams of morning light,
 Or breath of buds, or sound of song
 Remember'd, to keep safe from wrong,
 And wretchedness, and self-mistrust,
 Whatever warreth in this dust
 Against oblivion), that their grace
 May from my spirit purge and chase
 All that is in it not sweet and pure ;
 So may I look with insight sure
 Into myself, and favour find
 To make a mirror within my mind,
 Whereon, unsoil'd of any taint
 Of sinful thought, my most sweet saint
 Her fairness may from far let fall
 In a deep peace perpetual.

The memory of her is mellow light
 In darkness, mingling something bright
 With all things ; like a summer night.

The presence of her is young sunrise,
 That gladdeneth, and, in wondrous wise,
 Glorifieth, the earth and skies :

Her spirit is tender and bright as dew
 Of May-morn fresh, when stars be few :
 Her heart is harmless, simple, and true,

And blithe, and sweet, as bird in bower,
That singeth alone from hour to hour :
Her face is fair as April flower :

Her voice is fresh as bubbling bound
Of silver stream, in land new found,
That maketh ever a pleasant sound

To the soul of a thirsty traveller :
Her laugh is light as grasshopper :
Her breath is sweet as midsummer :

Her hair is a marvellous living thing
With a will of its own : the little locks fling
Showers of brown gold, gambolling,

Over the ever-fleeting shade
About her shoulder and sweet throat stray'd,
With delicate odours underlaid :

Like calm midsummer cloud, nor less
Clothed with sweet light and silentness,
She in her gracious movement is :

Noble withal, and free from fear
As heart of eagle, and high, and near
To heaven in all her ways : of cheer

Gentle, and meek, from harshness free
As heart of dove : nor chideth she
Things ill, but knoweth not that they be :

All clear as waters clean that run
Through shadow sweet, and through sweet sun,
Her pure thoughts are : scorn hath she none :

But in my Lady's perfect nature
All is sincere, and of sweet feature.
This earth hath none such other creature.

Rise, little Songs, on nimble wing !
Arise ! arise ! as larks do sing
Lost in that heaven of light they love,
So rise, so lose yourselves above
My darkness, in the perfect light
Of her that is so pure and bright !
Rise, little Songs ! with lusty cheer
Rise up to greet my Lady dear.
Be bold, and say to her with pride,—
“ We are the souls of loves that died ;
Whose sweetness is hope sorrow-fed,
Whose tendernesses tears unshed ;
And we are essences that rise
From passions burn'd in sacrifice ;
The youngest and bright-eyèd heirs
Of blind unbeautiful despairs ;
Voiced resignations, once dumb wrongs.”
Then, if she smile on you, my Songs,
Say, as I bid you, word for word,
“ Lady of him that is our lord,
We from his heart, where we were born,
Shelter'd, and shut from shame and scorn,
Now at his bidding (well-a-day
For him, and us !) being fled away,
Never again may there abide,
Never return, and, undenied,
Creep in, and fold our wings. and rest
At peace in our abandon'd nest.

Wherefore, dear mistress, prithee take
 (By true love sent, for true love's sake)
 To thy sweet heart, and spirit pure,
 Us, that must else but ill endure
 The scorns of time, and haply fare
 Homeless as birds in winter are."

But if that, on your way to greet
 My gracious Lady, ye should meet
 Haply elsewhere with other folk
 Who may ask ye in scorn or joke,—
 "Pray you now, little Songs, declare,
 Who is that lady so sweet and fair,
 Whereof this singer that sent ye sings,
 As certainly sweeter than all sweet things?"
 See that she answer not, Songs, but deep
 In your secretest hearts my secret keep;
 Lest the world, that loveth me not, should tell
 The name of the Lady I love so well.

LOVE-FANCIES.

SEE, with moonfern I have crown'd me !
 Arab spells shall now defend me.
 Weave a wizard circle round me,
 And burn amber,—lest Love rend me !
 O rapture, O fear, love !
 O stoop not too near, Love,
 Lest I die of thy touch, I who conjured thee here, love !

Since we parted yester eve,
 I do love thee, love, believe,
 Twelve times dearer, twelve hours longer,
 One dream deeper, one night stronger,
 One sun surer,—thus much more
 Than I loved thee, love, before.

Is it you or a garden of flowers,
 Blooming, blooming, breathing, breathing,
 Budding, budding; whence sweet Hours
 Their delighted brows are wreathing?
 Is it I or a nest of song-birds,
 Chirping, chirping all together?
 To the old birds pipe the young birds,
 ‘Fly, fly! it is summer weather!’

If your foot’s tip out you slide
 Your husht robe’s light white rims under,
 Sweeps a long, strong, scented tide,
 Wishful wave on wave, of wonder
 To me, through me, o’er me, down me,
 In delicious depths to drown me.
 When your foot’s tip back you slide
 (Some divine Unknown regaining
 Its stray’d treasure) then that tide,
 With its strong wave’s reflux straining,
 Sucks and sweeps my soul from me
 Out into a measureless sea.

Is it self-love to love thee so, •
Thou being my all I am, my me,
My very self indeed ? ah no,
Since all I am belongs to thee !

What is but many is but few :
A million halves do vainly clutch
At unity by multiplied half-action :
Mere one and one is merely two :
And merely two is one too much :
But you are I, and I am you,
And we two one, whose sum is such
That all the world else, with its loud ado,
Is nothing more than a superfluous fraction.

Love is Nature's eye-sight ! yes,
Nature is a giantess,
In whose forehead is one eye ;
That is Man ; and she thereby
Seeth God, and thereby only.
Wherefore, lest God leave her lonely,
She, that through the ages sleepeth
Never, ever open keepeth
That great eye upturn'd on God.
Yet were Nature but a clod,
Since her eye would then be blind,
Did not love illumine mankind.

O leave me, love, that narrow hand
Curl'd flowerlike in my folded palm,

Till all my soul doth understand,
 That Love's most perfect crown is Calm !
 I think that, by and by, all things
 Which were perplext a while ago,
 And life's long vain conjecturings
 Will simple, clear, and quiet grow.
 Already, round about me, some
 August and solemn sunset seems
 Deep-sleeping in a dewy dome
 Of twilight, o'er a land of dreams,
 Sombre, and soft, and infinite :
 The hush of old warm woods, that lie
 Low in the lap of Evening, bright,
 And bathed in vast tranquillity !

God's in matter everywhere :
 Flower, bird, beast, and man and woman,
 Earth, and water, fire, and air :
 All divine is all that's human.
 Only, matter's dense opaqueness
 Checks God's light from shining through it,
 And our senses (such their weakness !)
 Cannot help our souls to view it,
 Till Love lends the world translucence ;
 Then we see God clear in all things.
 Love's the new sense, Love's the true sense,
 Whereby souls learn how to call things !

EVENING.

ALREADY evening ! In the duskiest nook
Of yon dusk corner, under the Death's-head,
Between the alembecs, thrust this legended,
And iron-bound, and melancholy book,
For I will read no longer. The loud brook
Shelves his sharp light up shallow banks thin-
spread ;
The slumbrous west grows slowly red, and red :
Up from the ripen'd corn her silver hook
The moon is lifting : and deliciously
Along the warm blue hills the day declines :
The first star brightens while she waits for me,
And round her swelling heart the zone grows tight :
Musing, half-sad, in her soft hair she twines
The white rose, whispering "He will come to-
night !"

AT HER CASEMENT.

I AM knee-deep in grass, 'neath this warm June-night,
In the shade here, shut off from the great moonlight.
All alone, at her casement there,
She sits in the light, and she combs her hair.

She shakes it over the carved seat,
And combs it down to her stately feet.
And I watch her, hid in the blue June-night,
Till my soul grows faint with the costly sight.

There's no flaw on that fair fine brow of hers,
As fair and as proud as Lucifer's.
She looks in the glass as she turns her head :
She knows that the rose on her cheek is red :
She knows how her deep eyes shine—their light
Would scarcely be dimm'd though I died to-night.

I would that there in her chamber I stood,
Full-face to her terrible beauty : I would
I were laid on her queenly breast, at her lips,
With her warm hair wound through my finger-tips,
Draining her soul at one deep-drawn kiss.
And I would be humbly content, for this,
To die, as is due, before the morn,
Kill'd by her slowly-returning scorn.

ONE NIGHT.

I.

A FALLING star that shot across
The intricate and twinkling dark
Vanish'd, yet left no sense of loss
'Throughout the wide ethereal arc

II.

Of those serene and solemn skies
That round the dusky prospect rose,
And ever seem'd to rise, and rise,
Through regions of unreach'd repose.

III.

Far, on the windless mountain-range,
One crimson sparklet died : the blue
Flush'd with a brilliance, faint and strange,
The ghost of daylight, dying too.

IV.

But half-reveal'd, each terrace urn
Glimmer'd, where now, in filmy flight,
We watch'd return, and still return,
The blind bats searching air for sight.

V.

With sullen fits of fleeting sound,
Borne half asleep on slumbrous air,
The drowsy beetle humm'd around,
And pass'd, and oft repass'd us, there ;

VI.

Where, hand in hand, our looks alight
With thoughts our faint lips left untold,
We sat, in that delicious night,
On that dim terrace, green and old.

VII.

Deep down, far off, the city lay,
When forth from all its spires was swept
A music o'er our souls ; and they
To music's midmost meanings leapt ;

VIII.

And, crushing some delirious cry
 Against each other's lips, we clung
 Together silent, while the sky
 Throbbing with sound around us hung:

IX.

For, borne from bells on music soft,
 That solemn hour went forth through heaven,
 To stir the starry airs aloft,
 And thrill the purple pulse of even.

X.

O happy hush of heart to heart!
 O moment molten through with bliss!
 O Love, delaying long to part
 That first, fast, individual kiss!

XI.

Was it some drowsy rose that moved?
 Some dreaming dove's pathetic moan?
 Or was it my name from lips beloved?
 And was it thy sweet breath, my Own,

XII.

That made me feel the tides of sense
 O'er life's low levels rise with might
 And pour my being down the immense
 Shore of some sudden Infinite?

XIII.

"Oh, have I found thee, my soul's soul?
 My chosen forth from time and space!
 And did we then break earth's control?
 And have I seen thee face to face?

XIV.

"Close, closer to this bursting breast,
Closer thy long'd-for arms enfold !
I need such warmth, for else the rest
Of life will freeze me dead with cold.

XV.

"Long was the search, the effort long,
Ere I compell'd thee from thy sphere,
I know not by what mystic song,
I know not with what nightly tear:

XVI.

"But thou art here, beneath whose eyes
My passion falters, even as some
Pale wizard's taper sinks, and dies,
When to his spell a spirit is come.

XVII.

"What hath life been ? What will it be ?
How have I lived without thee ? How
Is life both lost and found in thee ?
Feel'st thou Forever in this Now ?

XVIII.

"All in a moment ! a whole world,
With all its wonders strange and far,
In one fierce point of glory furl'd ;
—A universe within a star !

XIX.

"Born for one bliss that could not fail,
How should faith flinch, or patience tire ?
I knew that Time could not prevail
Against my soul's intense desire,

XX.

“Nor shut these famisht eyes in night,
Of thee unsolaced. In which faith
Doubtless it must have been most light
To bear with life, and laugh at death :

XXI.

“But now, life hath so much to lose !
And death so much to take ! the heats
Of love’s least costly moments use
And burn life’s essence out in sweets !

XXII.

“Mere antechamber was the past
To the crown’d presence of this hour :
But, having seen his Queen at last,
In all her beauty, all her power,

XXIII.

“What merest Page would turn again
Content to hum the careless rhyme,
Or trifle with the courtier train,
That whiled, perchance, a previous time ?

XXIV.

“So the old life is lost, I know !
The new ? ’tis thine, not mine. My Own,
If thou should’st leave me lonely now,
I must be hopelessly alone.

XXV.

“As one idea, half divined,
Labours and frets within the brain
Of some sad artist, and the mind
Is vassal to imperious pain,

XXVI.

"For toil by day, for tears by night,
Till, in the sphere of vision brought,
Rises the beautiful, the bright
Predestined, and relentless Thought,

XXVII.

"So, clothed in the desire of years,
This love doth to its destined seat
Rise sovran, through the light of tears,
Achieved, accomplisht, and complete !

XXVIII.

"Ah, Dearest ! yet the artist's thought
Once freed, in form, from forth his soul,
By chance and time is seized, and caught
Beyond the artist's own control,

XXIX.

"To fare, he knows not how, for ill
Or well,—be shatter'd, or stand fast.
And this freed love, that doth fulfil
In thy bright presence my pale past,

XXX.

"How shall it fare, for weal or woe ?
Already is it pass'd away
How far beyond the yes or no
That once was in my power to say !

XXXI.

"'Tis mine no longer. It's am I.
And it, and I, Sweet-heart, are thine.
But thou thyself? . . . dear Destiny,
Swear, swear again, that thou art mine !

• XXXII.

"Swear twice and thrice, no future hour
 Shall ever blight what this hath blest !
 —Nay ! I possess thee by the power
 Whereby I am myself possest.

XXXIII.

"And come what may, and pass what must,
 Why we were born, at last, we know.
 Spirit to spirit ! . . . Let the dust
 Do with the dust what dust can do.

XXXIV.

"Why heed it ? . Our two souls 'tis sure,
 Now understand the one thing best.
 This is not earth's : this must endure :
 Be earth's spite wreak'd upon the rest !

XXXV.

"These eyes may lose thy looks,—their light :
 These lips from thine harsh fate may sever :
 Oh, looks and lips may disunite,
 But ever love is love for ever !"

AN EVENING IN TUSCANY.

Look ! the sun sets. Now's the rarest
 Hour of all the blessed day.
 (Just the hour, love, you look fairest !)
 Even the snails are out to play.

Cool the breeze mounts, like this Chianti
Which I drain down to the sun.
—There! shut up that old green Dante—
Turn the page, where we begun,
At the last news of Ulysses—
A grand image, fit to close
Just such grand gold eyes as this is,
Full of splendour and repose!
So loop up those long bright tresses—
Only, one or two must fall
Down your warm neck, Evening kisses
Through the soft curls spite of all.
And look down now, o'er the city
Sleeping soft among the hills—
Our dear Florence! That great Pitti
With its steady shadow fills
Half the town up: its unwinking
Cold white windows, as they glare
Down the long streets, set one thinking
Of the old Dukes who lived there;
For one knows them, those strange men, so—
Subtle brains, and iron thews!
There, the gardens of Lorenzo—
The long cypress avenues—
Creep up slow the stately hill side
Where the merry loungers are.
But far more I love this still side—
The blue plain you see so far!
Where the shore of bright white villas
Leaves off faint: the purple breadths
Of the olives and the willows:
And the gold-rimm'd mountain-widths:

All transfused in slumbrous glory
 To one burning point—the sun !
 But up here—slow, cold, and hoary
 Reach the olives, one by one :
 And the land looks fresh : the yellow
 Arbutë-berries, here and there,
 Growing slowly ripe and mellow
 Through a flush of rosy hair.
 For the Tramontana last week
 Was about : 'Tis scarce three weeks
 Since the snow lay, one white vast streak,
 Upon those old purple peaks.
 So to-day among the grasses
 One may pick up tens and twelves
 Of young olives, as one passes,
 Blown about, and by themselves
 Blackening sullen-ripe. The corn too
 Grows each day from green to golden.
 The large-eyed windflowers forlorn too
 Blow among it, un beholden :
 Some white, some crimson, others
 Purple blackening to the heart.
 From the deep wheat-sea, which smothers
 Their bright globes up, how they start !
 And the small wild pinks from tender
 Feather-grasses peep at us :
 While above them burns, on slender
 Stems, the red gladiolus :
 Are the grapes yet green ? this season
 They'll be round and sound and true,
 If no after-blight should seize on
 Those young bunches turning blue

O that night of purple weather
 (Just before the moon had set)
You remember how together
 We walked home!—the grass was wet—
The long grass in the Poderé—
 With the balmy dew among it:
And that Nightingale—his airy
 Song—how fairy-like he sung it!
All the fig-trees had grown heavy
 With the young figs white and woolly:
And the fireflies, bevy on bevy
 Of soft sparkles, pouring fully
Their warm life through trance on trances
 Of thick citrou-shades behind,
Rose, like swarms of loving fancies
 Through some rich and pensive mind.
So we reach'd the Logia. Leaning
 Faint, we sat there in the shade.
Neither spoke. The night's deep meaning
 Fill'd the silence up unsaid.
Hoarsely through the Cypress-alley
 A Civetta out of tune
Tried his voice by fits. The valley
 Lay all dark below the moon.
Until into song you burst out—
 That old song I made for you
When we found our rose—the first out
 Last sweet Spring-time in the dew.
Well! . . . if things had gone less wildly—
 Had I settled down before
There, in England—labour'd mildly—
 And been patient—and learn'd more

Of how men should live in London—
 Been less happy—or more wise—
 Left no great works tried and undone—
 Never look'd in your soft eyes—
 I . . . but what's the use of thinking?
 Hark ! our Nightingale—he sings—
 Now a rising note—now sinking
 Back in little broken rings
 Of warm song, that spread and eddy—
 Now he picks up heart—and draws
 His great music, slow and steady,
 To a silver-centred pause !

THE UTMOST.

SOME clerks aver that, as the tree doth fall,
 Even for ever so the tree shall lie,
 And that Death's act doth make perpetual
 The last state of the souls of men that die.
 If this be so,—if this, indeed, were sure,
 Then not a moment longer would I live ;
 Who, being now as I would fain endure,
 If man's last state doth his last hour survive,
 Should be among the blessed souls. I fear
 Life's many changes, not Death's changelessness.
 So perfect is this moment's passing cheer,
 I needs must tremble lest it pass to less.
 Thus but in fickle love of life I live,
 Lest fickle life me of my love deprive.

FALSE WITNESSES.

O TRAITOR eyes unkind !
Rather than ye should play
The spy and slanderer join'd
To my poor love, I pray
Some plague to strike ye blind !
And you, false ears, that lay
Foul pitfalls for my mind,
And wickedly betray
Your uses, be dead rind
Henceforth, and senseless clay,
Rather than ye should find
Such cruel means to prey
On Truth and Faith combined.
Sweet Saint, they wrong thee ! nay,
I heard not,—or the wind
Blows nothing true this way,
I saw not,—or I sinn'd,
Letting sight slip and stray ;—
It is these traitors twinn'd,
That dared to disobey
The charge to them consign'd,
These eyes, these ears,—'tis they,
Not thou that art unkind.
I heed not what they say.

THE SUBJECT'S APPEAL.

I.

DEAR despot of thy little state,
 This busy many-thoughted Me,
 Which thy sole will doth regulate,
 Since, 'twixt thy loyal folk and thee,

II.

(Thy loyal folk,—each feeling, thought,
 And fancy,—all the daily train
 Which throngs this heart and brain) there's nought
 That may thy sovran power restrain,

III.

Be in the uses of thy power
 Gentle, as noble monarchs are ;
 Nor vary with the varying hour,
 But, bright and constant as a star,

IV.

• Sit in the system of my soul,
 And there, unmoved, the motions all
 Of what thou mak'st my heaven control.
 Dear, though I be indeed thy thrall,

V.

And such a grace have kings, though bad,
 That even rebels, boldest grown
 By wrongs that make man's patience mad,
 Do fear to strike against the Crown,

VI.

Yet happy folk makes happy king :
And worthiest is that monarch's might
Whom freely freemen love, that cling
In loyal trust to legal right.

CLOUDY WEATHER.

I.

On the cold hill under the sky,
Here to-day, in the cloudy weather,
The wind, as he pass'd me by,
Laugh'd. "They two are walking together
Merry, and I know why,
For I met them as I came hither."

II.

The swallows were swinging themselves *
In the leaden-gray air aloft ;
Flitting by tens and twelves,
And returning oft and oft ;
Like the restless thoughts in me,
That went, and came, and went,
Not letting me even be
Alone with my discontent.

III.

The hard-vest weary vane
Rattled, and moan'd, and was still,

In the convent over the plain,
By the side of the windy hill.
It was sad to hear it complain
So fretful, and weak, and shrill,
Again, and again, and in vain,
While the wind was changing his will.

VI.

I thought of her face so bright,
By the firelight bending low
O'er her work so neat and white ;
Of her singing so soft and slow ;
Of her tender-toned " Good-night ;"
But a very few nights ago.

VII.

O'er the convent doors, I could see
A pale and sorrowful-eyed
Madonna looking at me,
As when Our Lord first died.
There was not a lizard or spider
To be seen on the broken walls.
The ruts, with the rain, had grown wider,
And blacker since last night's falls.
O'er the universal dulness
There broke not a single beam.
I thought how my love at its fulness
Had changed like a change in a dream.

VIII.

The olives were shedding fast
About me to left and right,
In the lap of the scornful blast
Black berries and leaflets white.
I thought "Of the seed I have cast,
Not a fruit will be spared by the blight."
And the ghosts of my hopes swept past
By a cold word put to flight.

IX.

How many precious seeds,
Yet bearing nor beauty nor worth !
The smoke of the burning weeds
Came up with the steam of the earth,
From the red, wet ledges of soil,
And the sere vines, row over row,—

And the vineyard-men at their toil,
Who sang in the vineyard below.

X.

I thought . . . "Can I live without her
Whatever she do, or say?"
I thought . . . "Can I dare to doubt her,
Now when I have given away
My whole self, body and spirit,
To keep, or to cast aside,
To dower or disinherit,—
To use as she may decide?"

But her voice, I groan'd, grows colder,
And her fair face colder still,
And "Oh!" I thought, . . . "if I behold her
Walking there with him under the hill!"

THE STORM.

I.

BOTH hollow and hill were as dumb as death,
While the skies were silently changing for n;
And the dread forecast of the thunder-storm
Made the crouch'd land hold in its breath.

II.

But the monstrous vapour as yet was unriven
That was breeding the thunder and lightning and
rain ;
And the wind that was waiting to ruin the plain
Was yet fast in some far hold of heaven.

III.

At the wide-flung casement she stood full height,
With her long rolling hair tumbled all down her
back ;
And, against the black sky's supernatural black,
Her white neck gleam'd scornfully white.

IV.

I could catch not a gleam of her anger'd eyes,
(She was sullenly watching the storm-cloud brood)
But I felt they were drawing down into her mood
The thunder that darken'd the skies.

V.

And how could I feign, in that heartless gloom,
To be carelessly reading that stupid page ?
What harm, if I flung it in anguish and rage,
Her book, to the end of the room ?

VI.

" And so, do we part thus for ever ? " . . . I said ;
" O speak only one word, and I pardon the rest ! "
She drew her white scarf tighter over her breast,
But she never once turn'd round her head.

VII.

"Ah, must sweet love sourly play with pain?
Or"—I groan'd—"are those dark eyes such deserts
of blindness,
That, O Woman! your heart must hoard all its
unkindness,
For the man on whose breast it hath lain?"

VIII.

"Speak! the horrible silence is stifling my soul."
She turn'd on me at once all the storm in her eyes;
And I heard the low thunder aloof in the skies,
Beginning to mutter and roll.

IX.

She turn'd—by the lightning reveal'd in its glare,
And the tempest had clothed her with terror: it
clung
To the folds of her vaporous garments, and hung
In the heaps of her heavy wild hair.

X.

But one word broke the silence; but one; and it fell
With the weight of a mountain upon me. Next
moment
The fierce levin flash'd in my eyes. From my com-
ment
She was gone when I turn'd. Who can tell

XI.

How I got to my home on the mountain? I know
That the thunder was rolling, the lightning still
flashing,

The great bells were tolling, my very brain crashing
In my head, but a short while ago :

XII.

Then all hush'd. In the distance the blue rain re-
ceded ;

And the fragments of storm were spread out on the
hills ;

Hard by, from my lattice, I heard the far rills
Leaping down their rock-channels, wild-weeded.

XIII.

The round, red moon was yet low in the air. . . .

Oh, I knew it, foresaw it, and felt it, before

I heard her light hand on the latch of the door !

When it open'd at last,—she was there.

XIV.

Child-like, and wistful, and sorrowful-eyed,

With the rain in her hair, and the rain on her cheek :

She knelt down, with her fair forehead fallen and
meek

In the light of the moon at my side.

XV.

And she call'd me by every caressing old name

She of old had invented and chosen for me :

She crouch'd at my feet, with her cheek on my knee,
Like a wild thing grown suddenly tame.

XVI.

In the world there are women enough, maids or
mothers :

Yet, in multiplied millions, I never should find

The symbol of aught in her face, or her mind.
She has nothing in common with others.

XVII.

And she loves me ! This morning the earth, press'd
 beneath
Her light foot, keeps the print. 'Twas no vision
 last night,
For the lily she dropp'd, as she went, is yet white
With the dew on its delicate sheath !

FORBEARANCE.

I.

CALL me not, Love, unthankful, nor unkind,
That I have left my heart with thee, and fled :
I were not worth that wealth which I resign'd,
Had I not chosen poverty instead.

II.

Grant me but solitude ! I dare not swerve
From my soul's rights—a slave, though serving
 thee.
I but forbear more grandly to deserve :
The free gift only cometh of the free.

A LOVE-LETTER.

I.

My love,—my chosen,—but not mine ! I send
My whole heart to thee in these words I write ;
So let the blotted lines, my soul's sole friend,
Lie upon thine, and there be blest at night.

II.

This flower, whose bruised purple blood will stain
The page now wet with the hot tears that fall—
(Indeed, indeed, I struggle to restrain
This weakness, but the tears come, spite of all !)

III.

I pluck'd it from the branch you used to praise,
The branch that hides the wall. I tend your flowers.
I keep the paths we paced in happier days.
How long ago they seem, those pleasant hours !

IV.

The white laburnum's out. Your judas-tree
Begins to shed those crimson buds of his.
The nightingales sing—ah, too joyously !
Who says those birds are sad ? I think there is

V.

That in the books we read, which deeper wrings
My heart, so they lie dusty on the shelf.
Ah me, I meant to speak of other things
Less sad. In vain ! they bring me to myself.

VI.

I know your patience. And I would not cast
 New shade on days so dark as yours are grown
 By weak and wild repining for the past,
 Since it is past for ever, O my Own !

VII.

For hard enough the daily cross you bear,
 Without that deeper pain reflection brings ;
 And all too sore the fretful household care,
 Free of the contrast of remember'd things.

VIII.

But ah ! it little profits, that we thrust
 From all that's said what both must feel, unnamed.
 Better to face it boldly, as we must,
 Than feel it in the silence, and be shamed.

IX.

Irene, I have loved you, as men love
 Light, music, odour, beauty, love itself ;—
 Whatever is apart from, and above
 Those daily needs which deal with dust and self.

X.

And I had been content, without one thought
 Our guardian angels could have blusht to know,
 So to have lived and died, demanding nought
 Save, living, dying, to have loved you so.

XI.

My youth was orphan'd, and my age will be
Childless. I have no sister. None, to steal
One stray thought from the lifelong thoughts of thee,
Which are the fountains of whate'er I feel.

XII.

My wildest wish was vassal to thy will :
My haughtiest hope, a pensioner on thy smile,
Which did with light my barren being fill,
As moonlight glorifies some desert isle.

XIII.

I never thought, to know what I have known,—
The rapture, Dear, of being loved by you :
I never thought, within my heart, to own
One wish so blest, that you should share it too :

XIV.

Nor ever did I deem, contemplating
The many sorrows in this place of pain,
So strange a sorrow to my life could cling,
As, being thus loved, to be beloved in vain.

XV.

But now we know the best, the worst. We have
Interr'd, and prematurely, and unknown,
Our youth, our hearts, our hopes, in one small grave,
Whence we must wander, widow'd, to our own.

LYRICAL.

XVI.

And if we comfort not each other, what
Shall comfort us in the dark days to come?
Not the light laughter of the world, and not
The faces and the firelight of fond home.

XVII.

And so I write to you ; and write, and write,
For the mere sake of writing to you, Dear.
What can I tell you that you know not? Night
Is deepening through the rosy atmosphere

XVIII.

About the lonely casement of this room,
Which you have left familiar with the grace
That grows where you have been. And on the gloom
I almost fancy I can see your face :

XIX.

Not pale with pain, and tears restrain'd for me,
As when I last beheld it ; but as first,
A dream of rapture and of poesy,
Upon my youth, like dawn on dark, it burst.

XX.

Perchance I shall not ever see again
That face. I know that I shall never see
Its radiant beauty as I saw it then,
Save by this lonely lamp of memory.

XXI.

With childhood's starry graces lingering yet
I' the rosy orient of young womanhood ;
And eyes like woodland violets newly wet ;
And lips that left their meaning in my blood !

XXII.

I will not say to you what I might say
To one less worthily loved, less worthy love.
I will not say . . . ' Forget the past. Be gay.
And let the all-ill-judging world approve

XXIII.

Light in your eyes, and laughter on your lip.'
I will not say . . . ' Dissolve in thought for ever
Our sorrowful, but sacred fellowship.'
For that would be to bid you, Dear, dis sever

XXIV.

Your nature from its nobler heritage
In consolations, register'd in Heaven,
For griefs this world is powerless to assuage,
And hopes to which, on earth, no home is given.

XXV.

I will not cant that commonplace of friends,
Which never yet hath dried one mourner's tears,
Nor say that grief's slow wisdom makes amends
For broken hearts and desolated years.

XXVI.

For who would barter all he hopes from life,
 To be a little wiser than his kind ?
 Who arm his nature for continued strife,
 When all he seeks for hath been left behind ?

XXVII.

Wherefore it happens, in this riddling world,
 That where sin came not, sorrow yet should be ;
 Why Heaven's most hurtful thunders should be hurl'd
 At what seems noblest in Humanity ;

XXVIII.

And we are punish'd for our purest deeds,
 And chasten'd for our holiest thoughts ; . . . alas !
 There is no reason found in all the creeds,
 Why these things are, nor whence they come to pass.

XXIX.

But in the heart of man, a secret voice
 There is, which speaks and will not be restrain'd,
 Which cries to Grief . . . Weep on, while I rejoice,
 Knowing that, somewhere, all will be explain'd.'

XXX.

And I would say, ' O pure and perfect pearl,
 O love which life hath dived so deep to find,
 Lock'd in life's heart thou liest. The wave may curl,
 The wind may wail above thee. Wave and wind,

XXXI.

Nor break, nor shake, thee.' Dear, on me and you
Life's storms have broken, but our love lives calm.
This life of ours, what is it? A very few
Soon-ended years, and then,—the ceaseless psalm.

XXXII.

And the eternal sabbath of the soul !
Hush ! . . . while I write, from the dim Carminè
The midnight angelus begins to roll,
And float athwart the darkness up to me.

XXXIII.

My messenger (a man by danger tried)
Waits in the courts below ; and ere our star
Upon the forehead of the dawn hath died,
Heart of my heart, this letter will be far

XXXIV.

Athwart the mountain, and the mist, to you.
I know each robber hamlet. I know all
This mountain people. I have friends, both true
And trusted, sworn to aid whate'er befall.

XXXV.

I have a bark upon the gulf. And I,
If to my heart I yielded in this hour,
Might say . . . ' Sweet fellow-sufferer, let us fly !
I know a little isle which doth embower

XXXVI.

'A home where exiled angels might forbear
 Awhile to mourn for Paradise.' . . . But no !
 Never, whate'er fate now may bring us, Dear,
 Shalt thou reproach me for that only woe

XXXVII.

Which even love is powerless to console ;
 Which dwells where duty dies : and haunts the void
 Of life's abandon'd purpose in the soul ;
 The accusing ghost of what itself destroy'd.

XXXVIII.

Man cannot make, but may ennoble, fate,
 By nobly bearing it. So let us trust
 Death's justice, if not Life's, and calmly wait
 Love's orient, out of darkness and of dust.

XXXIX.

Farewell, and yet again farewell, and yet
 Never farewell,—if farewell mean to fare
 Alone and disunited. Love hath set
 Our days, in music, to the self-same air ;

XL.

And I shall feel, wherever we may be,
 Even though in absence and an alien clime,
 The shadow of the sunniness of thee,
 Hovering, in patience, through a clouded time.

XLI.

Farewell ! The dawn is rising, and the light
Is making, in the east, a faint endeavour
To illuminate the mountain peaks. Good night,
Thine own, and only thine, my love, for ever.

THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST.

NEVER, dear, distant angel of my sorrow,
Never more thy sweet solacings, to cheer me,
Eve shall vouchsafe, no morrow
Come with the comfort of thy beauty near me !

Long since parted travellers, we may not
Flatter life's lone ways even with a semblance
Of hand in hand. Yet say not
Vain is the restless rapture of remembrance.

Memories, Dearest, are the sole possessions
Man may bear with him over the Dark River.
Brief are our pains, our passions,
We in their memories do live for ever.

Thou, by the lilled lawn, the arbuté bowers,
Dwellest, and where, 'mid old Italian fountains,
Pause the blue breathless hours
Ere they move westward o'er the happy mountains.

Thee, life eluding in thy green recesses,
 Change cannot reach abruptly. Time shall sprinkle
 Snow on thy golden tresses
 Slowly, and slowly bring the brow's first wrinkle.

I, still pursuing with a fretful fever
 Far off the wandering planet of the distance,
 Footsore, do fare for ever
 O'er the dry deserts of a scorch'd existence.

What may renew the old, the happy hours?
 Memories of thee, ever youthful-hearted,
 'Mid unforgotten flowers
 Beckon back time into the days departed.

Whether, by Danube darkening to the ocean,
 I through the gateways of the Orient wander,
 Or where, with gentle motion,
 Thames' fluent lengths among the lawns meander,

Still, like a gliding ghost, from my own presence
 Nightly I steal forth to the ancient places,
 And, with the rose's essence,
 Follow thee through the Garden of the Graces.

Place me where, 'neath the red Arabian heaven,
 All in a camel-colour'd land, unbroken
 By man's abodes, not even
 Nature leaves one sick palm-tree for a token,

Place me where round bleak Baltic headlands, piling
 Pale foam, the chafed sea spends his last endeavour,
 Still shall I see thee smiling
 Sweetly, still hear thee sweetly talking ever.

NIGHT.

COME to me, not as once thou camest, Night !
With light and splendour up the gorgeous West ;
Easing the heart's rich sense of thee with sighs
Sobb'd out of all emotion on Love's breast ;
While the dark world waned wavering into rest,
Half seen athwart the dim delicious light
Of languid eyes :

But softly, soberly ; and dark—more dark !
Till my life's shadow lose itself in thine.
Athwart the light of slowly-gathering tears,
That come between me and the starlight, shine
From distant melancholy deeps divine,
While day slips downward through a rosy arc
To other spheres.

HOME-SICKNESS.

I, OFTEN lying lonely, over seas,
At ope of day, soft-couch'd in foreign land,
Dream a green dream of England ; when young trees
Make murmur, and the amber-striped bees
To search the woodbine through, a busy band,
Come floating at the casement, while new tann'd

And tedded hay sends fresh on morning breeze
Incense of sunny fields, through curtains fann'd
With invitations faint to Far-away.
So dreaming, half-awake, at ope of day,
Dream I of daisy greens, and village pales,
And the white winking of the warmèd may
In blossomy hedge, and brown oak-leavèd dales,
And little children dear, at dewy play,
Till all my heart grows young and glad as they ;
And sweet thoughts come and go, like scented gales,
Through an open window when the month is gay.

But often, wandering lonely, over seas,
At shut of day, in unfamiliar land,
What time the serious light is on the leas,
To me there comes a sighing after ease
Much wanted, and an aching wish to stand
Knee-deep in English grass, and have at hand
A little churchyard cool, with native trees,
And grassy mounds thick-laced with ozier band,
Wherein to rest at last, nor further stray.
So, sad of heart, muse I, at shut of day,
On safe and quiet England ; till thought ails
With inward groanings deep for meadows gray,
Gray copses cool with twilight, shady dales,
Home-gardens, full of rest, where never may
Come loud intrusion ; and, what chiefly fails
My sick desire, old friendships fled away.
I am much vext with loss. Kind Memory, lay
My head upon thy lap, and tell me tales
Of the good old time, when all was pure and gay !

THE HEART AND NATURE.

I.

THE lake is calm ; and, calm, the skies
In yonder cloudless sunset glow,
Where, o'er the woodland, homeward flies
The solitary crow ;

II.

No moan the cushat makes to heave
A leaflet round her windless nest ;
The air is silent in the eve ;
The world's at rest.

III.

All bright below ; all pure above ;
No sense of pain, no sign of wrong ;
Save in thy heart of hopeless love,
Poor Child of Song !

IV.

Why must the soul through Nature rove,
At variance with her general plan ?
A stranger to the Power, whose love
Soothes all save Man ?

V.

Why lack the strength of meaner creatures ?
The wandering sheep, the grazing kine,

Are surer^d of their simple natures
Than I of mine.

VI.

For all their wants the poorest land
Affords supply ; they browse and breed ;
I scarce divine, and ne'er have found,
What most I need.

VII.

O God, that in this human heart
Hath made Belief so hard to grow,
And set the doubt, the pang, the smart
In all we know—

VIII.

Why hast thou, too, in solemn jest
At this tormented Thinking-power,
Inscribed, in flame on yonder West,
In hues on every flower,

IX.

Through all the vast unthinking sphere
Of mere material Force without,
Rebuke so vehement and severe
To the least doubt ?

X.

And robed the world, and hung the night,
With silent, stern, and solemn forms ;
And strawn with sounds of awe, and might,
The seas and storms ;—

XI.

All lacking power to impart
To man the secret he assails,
But arm'd to crush him, if his heart
Once doubts or fails !

XII.

To make him feel the same forlorn
Despair, the Fiend hath felt ere now,
In gazing at the stern sweet scorn
On Michael's brow ?

AUTUMN.

I.

So now, then, Summer's over—by degrees.
Hark ! 'tis the wind in yon red region grieves.
Who says the world grows better, growing old ?
See ! what poor trumpery on those pauper trees,
That cannot keep, for all their fine gold leaves,
Their last bird from the cold.

II.

This is Dame Nature, pucker'd, pinch'd, and sour,
Of all the charms, her poets praised, bereft,
Scowling, and scolding (only hear her, there !)
Like that old spiteful Queen, in her last hour,
Whom Spenser, Shakespeare sung to . . . nothing
left
But wrinkles, and red hair !

THE SWALLOW.

O SWALLOW chirping in the spangled eaves,
 Why hast thou left far south thy fairy homes,
 To build between these drenchèd April-leaves,
 And sing me songs of Spring before it comes?
 Too soon thou singest! Yon black stubborn thorn
 Bursts not a bud: the sneaping wind drifts on.
 She that once flung thee crumbs, and in the morn
 Sang from the lattice where thou sing'st, is gone.
 Here is no Spring. Thy flight yet further follow.
 Fly off, vain swallow!

Thou com'st to mock me with remember'd things.
 I love thee not, O bird for me too gay.
 That which I want thou hast—the gift of wings:
 Grief—which I have—thou hast not. Fly away!
 What hath my roof for thee? my cold dark roof,
 Beneath whose weeping thatch thine eggs will
 freeze!
 Summer will halt not here, so keep aloof.
 Others are gone; go thou. In those wet trees
 I see no Spring though thou still singest of it.
 Fare hence, false prophet!

MEETING AGAIN.

I.

Yes ; I remember the white rose. And since then
the young ivy has grown ;
From your window we could not reach it, and now it
is over the stone.
We did not part as we meet, Dear. Well, Time hath
his own stern cures !
And Alice's eyes are deeper, and her hair has grown
like yours.

II.

Is our greeting all so strange then ? But there's
something here amiss,
When it is not well to speak kindly. And the olives
are ripe by this.
I had not thought you so alter'd. But all is changed,
God knows !
Good-night. It is night so soon now. Look there !
You have dropt your rose.

III.

Nay, I have one that is wither'd and dearer to me.
I came
To say good-night, little Alice. She does not re-
member my name.
It is but the damp that is making my head and my
heart ache so.
I never was strong in the old time, as the others were,
you know.

IV.

And you'll sleep well, will you not, Darling? The
 old words sound so dear!
 'Tis the last time I shall use them; you need show
 neither anger nor fear.
 It is well that you look so cheerful. And is time so
 smooth with you?
 How foolish I am! Good-night, Dear. And bid
 Alice good-night too.

OLD AND NEW.

I.

ALL in its place as of old!
 Nothing changed to the eye.
 The moss'd rust-tinted mass
 Of the Manse in the meadow grass;
 The half-moon afloat in a sky
 Gray, neither warm nor cold.
 All in its place as of old,
 Nothing changed to the eye!
 High over the mildewy pane
 Of the long, low granary room,
 In the mothy, moist ground-story,
 The grass ripples russet, and hoary
 With the cuckoo-flowers in bloom,
 That mix their sick perfume

With the earthy smell of the rain,
Clinging under each violet stain
Of the streak'd and showery gloom.
The red beech weepeth ;
The cuckoo calleth ;
In the fields afar
Night waits.
The silence sleepeth ;
The twilight falleth,
And the dim yellow star
Dilates.
All in the dew
Hath the self-same hue.
Nothing looks new.

II.

Nothing changed to the eye ;
Yet something is not as of old.
Where, and what, is the change ?
All is the same, yet strange.
My very heart grows cold ;
My lightest breath is a sigh.
Between the earth and the sky,
Something is not as of old.
The buttercup's glimmering gold !
And the vetch with the purple dye !
And the wall-flower fading fast !
And the reeds in the creek where, aghast,
The stream like a ghost flits by,
With a moan to the watery sky,

Grazing the bulrush cold !
 All in its place as of old,
 Nothing changed to the eye !
 The thin wave fleeteth ;
 The white sail glideth ;
 The blue reeds sigh
 To the shore.
 The light retreateth ;
 The place abideth
 Under my eye,
 As of yore.
 But the very dew
 Doth chill me through.
 All things feel new.

III.

Ah, memory is of the brain !
 The heart remembers not ;
 The heart can never recall ;
 It feels, it hath felt, that is all ;
 And a feeling unforgot
 Is a feeling felt again.
 This is a joy which the brain
 Renews, but the heart cannot.
 I recall what I felt of old,
 But I feel, not what I recall.
 This,—this is the change !
 This is why all feels strange !
 Happy for man, after all,
 That is Eden, after his fall,

God suffer'd him not to behold !
What I never may feel as of old
I would I might never recall.
But the river glideth ;
The red beech weepeth ;
The reeds to the shore
Still sigh.
The place abideth ;
The dead Past keepeth
The form it first wore
To the eye.
Ah few, how few,
In the heart can renew
What the eye may review !

EARTH'S HAVINGS.

WEARY, the cloud falleth out o' the sky,
Dreary the leaf lieth low.
All things must come to the earth by and by,
Out of which all things grow.

Let the wild wind laugh and whistle
Aloof in the lonesome wood ;
In our garden let the thistle
Start where the rose-tree stood ;
Let the rotting moss fall rotten
With the rain-drops from the eaves ;

Let the dead Past lie forgotten
In his grave, with the yellow leaves.

Weary the cloud falleth out o' the sky,
Dreary the leaf lieth low.
All things must come to the earth by and by,
Out of which all things grow.

And again the hawthorn pale
Shall blossom sweet i' the spring ;
And again the nightingale
In the deep blue nights shall sing ;
And seas o' the wind shall wave
In the light of the golden grain ;
But the love that is gone to his grave
Shall never return again.

Weary the cloud falleth out o' the sky,
Dreary the leaf lieth low.
All things must come to the earth by and by,
Out of which all things grow.

A FAREWELL.

I.

BE happy, child. The last wild words are spoken.
To-morrow, mine no more, the world will claim thee.
I blame thee not, but all my life is broken ;
Of what hath been I save not even a token.
Never in years to come my lips shall name thee,
Never, child, never.

II.

I will not say 'Forget me,' nor those hours
Which were so sweet. Some scent dead leaves retain.
Keep all the flowers I gave thee—all the flowers,
Dead! dead! Though years on years of life were ours,
As we have met we shall not meet again,
For ever, child! for ever!

FUTILITY.

I.

LET us not be dissatisfied
With Nature. She is in her right.
I neither blame thee, Sweet, nor chide.
As, on a clear spring night,

II.

The cold encumbrance of the snow
Drops from the bosom of the hills,
So all my life from thine lets go,
And all its weight of ills

III.

Drops from thee. Set thy smooth smile free,
Assert thy youth, bloom forth unblamed
Beyond me! Whatsoe'er we be,
Why should we be ashamed?

IV.

That which we are, we are. 'Twere vain
To plant with toil what may not blow.
The cloud will break and bring the rain,
Whether we reap, or sow.

V.

All finds its place. We shall not miss
God's meaning, whatsoe'er He mean.
If this were that, or that were this,
What hath been had not been.

VI.

Let all be as it is, dear Love.
There is no better thing than sleep.
They only fall, that strive to move,
Or lose, that care to keep.

VII.

Let go what will not stay. What then?
Seed-time, and harvest,—soon, the snow!
Above the graves of buried men
The grass hath leave to grow.

THE CANTICLE OF LOVE.

I HEARD an Angel in the midnight sky,
That made sweet singing to a golden lute.
The pole star, and the planets seven, and I
To his sweet singing did give audience mute;

Which heard made all things else to seem most sweet,
Such rapture was in those divine lute-strings !
Such rapture that Heaven's Seraphs, about his feet,
Thrill'd to the bright ends of their burning wings.

"The song he singeth," sigh'd those Seraphs fair,
"Is Love." But I the words had heard elsewhere.

For, when I last was in the nethermost Hell,
There on a sulphurous headland wild, I heard
A Spirit pale, that to a hollow shell
The selfsame song was singing, word for word ;
Which then so sadly sounded, its sad sound
Hell's aching heart did heave to deeper pain,
While Fiends, with foreheads scarr'd, that crouch'd
around,
Drooping dark wings, made murmur, "Vain, ah
vain !"

Yet moan'd those Fiends, "The song he singeth there
Is Love." But he that sung it was Despair.

LITTLE ELLA.

I KNOW now, little Ella, what the flowers
Said to you then, to make your cheek so pale ;
And why the blackbird in our laurel bowers
Spake to you, only ; and the poor, pink snail

Fear'd less your steps than those of the May-shower.
 It was not strange these creatures loved you so,
 And told you all. 'Twas not so long ago
 You were, yourself, a bird, or else a flower.

II.

And, little Ella, you were pale, because
 So soon you were to die. I know that now.
 And why there ever seem'd a sort of gauze
 Over your deep blue eyes, and sad young brow.
 You were too good to grow up, Ella, you,
 And be a woman such as I have known !
 And so upon your heart they put a stone,
 And left you, Dear, amongst the flowers and dew.

III.

O thou, the morning star of my dim soul !
 My little elfin friend from Fairy-Land !
 Whose memory is yet innocent, of the whole
 Of that which makes me doubly need thy hand,
 Thy guiding hand from mine so soon withdrawn !
 Here where I find so little like to thee.
 For thou wert as the breath of dawn to me,
 Starry, and pure, and brief as is the dawn.

IV.

Thy knight was I, and thou my Fairy Queen.
 ('Twas in the days of love and chivalry !)
 And thou didst hide thee in a bower of green.
 But thou so well hast hidden thee, that I

Have never found thee since. And thou didst set
Many a task, and quest, and high emprise,
Ere I should win my guerdon from thine eyes,
So many, and so many, that not yet

V.

My tasks are ended, nor my wanderings o'er.
But some day there will come across the main
A magic barque, and I shall quit this shore
Of care, and find thee, in thy bower, again ;
And thou wilt say, " My brother, hast thou found
Our home at last ? " . . . Whilst I, in answer, Sweet,
Shall heap my life's last booty at thy feet,
And bare my breast with many a bleeding wound.

VI.

The spoils of time ! the trophies of a world !
The keys of conquer'd towns, and captived kings,
And many a broken sword, and banner furl'd,
The heads of giants, and swart soldan's rings,
And many a maiden's scarf, and many a wand
Of baffled wizard, many an amulet,
And many a shield with mine own heart's blood
wet,
And jewels rare from many a distant land !

VII.

How sweet, with thee, my sister, to renew,
In lands of light, the search for those bright birds
Of plumage so ethereal in its hue,
And music sweeter than all mortal words,

Which some good angel to our childhood sent
 With messages from Paradisal flowers,
 So lately left, the scent of Eden bowers
 Yet linger'd in our hair, where'er we went !

VIII.

Now, they are all fled by this many a year,
 Adown the viewless valleys of the wind,
 And never more will cross this hemisphere,
 Those birds of passage ! Never shall I find,
 Dropt from the flight, you follow'd, Dear, so far,
 That you will never come again, I know,
 One plumelet on the paths whereby I go
 Missing thy light there, O my morning star !

IX.

She pass'd out of my youth, at the still time
 O' the early light, when all was green and husht.
 She pass'd, and pass'd away. Some broken rhyme
 Scrawl'd on the panel or the pane : the crusht
 And faded rose she dropp'd : the page she turn'd
 And finish'd not : the ribbon or the knot
 That flutter'd from her . . . Stranger, harm them
 not !
 I keep these sacred relics undiscern'd.

A FOOTSTEP.

WITHIN my mind there is a garden : part
 Sprung from the greenest stray-aways of Spring
 In a dewy time : part by long labouring
 Of toilful Love, and many a culturing art

Learn'd of skill'd Grief in patientness of heart,
Nor without weariness, wrought. Deep-blossoming
Growths of long-planted pain cold shadow fling,
Sun-proof to every casual golden dart,
Over one aspect of this haunt. Elsewhere
Full sunlight sleeps for ever. Many a day
I lose myself about this quiet place,
Following one footstep ever the same way.
Dear, 'tis thy ghostly footstep that I trace,
But thee thyself I find not here nor there.

DIVIDED LIVES.

O LIVES beloved, wherein mine once did live,
Thinking your thoughts, and walking in your ways,
On your dear presence pasturing all my days,
In pleasantness, and peace ; whose moods did give
The measure to my own ! how vainly strive
Poor Fancy's fingers, numb'd by time, to raise
This vail of woven years, that from my gaze
To hide what now you are doth still contrive !
Dear lives, I marvel if to you yet clings
Of mine some colour ; and my heart then feels
Much like the ghost of one who died too young
To be remember'd well, that sometimes steals
A family of unsad friends among
Sighing, and hears them talk of other things.

REQUIESCAT.

I sought to build a deathless monument
 To my dead love. Therein I meant to place
 All precious things and rare : as Nature blent
 All single sweetnesses in one sweet face.
 I could not build it worthy her mute merit,
 Nor worthy her white brows and holy eyes,
 Nor worthy of her perfect and pure spirit,
 Nor of my own immortal memories.
 But, as some rapt artificer of old,
 To enshrine the ashes of a Virgin Saint,
 Might scheme to work with ivory, and fine gold,
 And carven gems, and legended and quaint
 Seraphic heraldries; searching far lands,
 Orient and occident, for all things rare,
 To consecrate the toil of reverent hands,
 And make his labour, like her virtue, fair ;
 Knowing no beauty beautiful as she,
 And all his labour void, but to beguile
 A sacred sorrow ; so I work'd. Ah, see
 Here are the fragments of my shatter'd pile !
 I keep them, and the flowers that sprang between
 Their broken workmanship—the flowers and
 weeds !
 Sleep soft among the violets, O my Queen—
 Lie calm among my ruin'd thoughts and deeds.

THE SHORE.

CAN it be women that walk in the sea-mist, under
the cliffs there

Which the unsatisfied surge sucks with importunate lip?

There, where out from the sand-chok'd anchors, on
to the skiffs there,

Twinkle the slippery ropes, swinging adip and
adrip?

All the place in a lurid, glimmering, emerald glory,
Glares like a Titan world come back under heaven
again :

Yonder, aloof are the steeps of the sea-kings, famous
in story ;

But who are they on the beach ? they are neither
women nor men.

Who knows, are they the land's, or the water's, living
creatures ?

Born of the boiling sea ? nurst in the seething
storms ?

With their woman's hair dishevell'd over their stern
male features,

Striding, bare to the knee ; magnified maritime
forms !

They may be the mothers and wives, they may be
the sisters and daughters

Of men on the dark mid-seas, alone in those black
coil'd hulls,

That toil 'neath yon white cloud, whence the moon
will rise o'er the waters

To-night, with her face on fire, if the wind in the
evening lulls.

But they may be merely visions, such as only sick
men witness,

(Sitting as I sit here, fill'd with a wild regret,)

Fram'd from the sea's misshapen spume with a hor-
rible fitness

To the winds in which they walk, and the surges
by which they are wet:—

Salamanders, seawolves, witches, warlocks; marine
monsters

Which the dying seaman beholds, when the rats
are swimming away,

And an Indian wind 'gins hiss from an unknown
isle, and alone stirs

The broken cloud which burns on the verge of
the dead, red day.

I know not. All in my mind is confused; nor can
I dis sever

The mould of the visible world from the shape of
my thoughts in me.

The Inward and Outward are fused: and, through
them, murmur for ever

The sorrow whose sound is the wind, and the roar
of the limitless sea.

THE NORTH.

I.

By the bleak headlands, where the wind searches
what he finds never

O'er the sand-reaches, o'er the blown beaches, homeless
for ever !

Here walk the lost Gods o' dark Scandinavia, morning
and even ;

Faint pale divinities, realmless and sorrowful, exiled
from Heaven ;

Burthen'd with memories of old theogonies ; each
ruin'd monarchy

Roaming amazed by seas oblivious of ancient fealty.

Never, again at the tables of Odin, in their lost
Banquet Hall,

Shall they from golden cups drink, hearing golden
harps, harping high festival,

Never praise bright-hair'd Freya, in Vingolf, for her
lost loveliness !

Never, with Ægir, sail round cool moonlit isles of
green wilderness !

Here on the lone wind, through the long twilight,
when day is waning,

Many a hopeless voice near the night is heard coldly
complaining,

Here, in the glimmering darkness, when winds are
dropp'd, and not a seaman sings
From cape or foreland, pause, and pass silently, forms
of discrownèd kings,
With sweeping, floating folds of dim garments ;
wandering in wonder
Of their own aspect ; trooping towards midnight ;
feeling for thunder.

II.

Here, in the afternoon ; while, in her father's boat,
heavily laden,
Mending the torn nets, sings up the bleak bay the
Fisher-Maiden,
I too, forlornly wandering, wandering, see, with the
mind's eye,
Shadows beside me, . . . (hearing the wave moan,
hearing the wind sigh.) . .
Shadows, and images balefully beautiful, of days
departed :
Sounds of faint footsteps, gleams of pale foreheads,
make me sad-hearted ;
Sad for the lost, irretrievable sweetness of former
hours ;
Sad with delirious, desolate odours, from faded
flowers ;
Sad for the beautiful gold hair, the exquisite, ex-
quisite graces
Of a divine face, hopelessly unlike all other faces !

III.

O'er the grey sand-hills (where I sit sullenly, full of
 black fancies),
 Nipt by the sea-wind, drench'd by the sea-salt, little
 wild pansies
 Flower, and freshly tremble, and twinkle; sweet
 sisterhoods,
 Lone, and how lovely, with their frail green stems,
 and dark purple hoods!

* * * * *

IV.

Here, even here in the midst of monotonous, fixt
 desolation,
 Nature has touches of tenderness, beauties of young
 variation;
 Where, O my heart, in thy ruin'd, and desolate,
 desolate places,
 Springs there a flow'ret, or gleams there the green
 of a single oasis!
 Hidden, it may be perchance, and I know it not . . .
 hidden yet inviolate,
 Pushes the germ of an unconscious rapture in me,
 like the violet
 Which, on the bosom of March, the snows cover
 and keep till the coming
 Of April, the first bee shall find, when he wanders,
 . . . and welcome it humming.

V.

Teach me, thou North, where the winds lie in ambush ; the rains, and foul weather
Are stored in the house of the storms ; and the snow-flakes are garner'd together ;
Where man's stern, dominate, sovereign intelligence holds in allegiance
Whatever blue Sirius beholds on this Earth-ball—
all seas and all regions ;
The iron in the hills' heart : the spirit in the load-stone ; the ice in the poles ;
All powers, all dominions ; ships ; merchandise ; armaments : beasts : human souls ; . . .
Teach me thy secrets : teach to refrain, to restrain, to be still ;
Teach me unspoken, steadfast endurance ;—the silence of Will !

THE MERMAIDEN.

I.

HE was a Prince with golden hair,
(In a palace beside the sea,)
And I but a little white Mermaiden,
And how should he care for me ?

II.

Last summer I came, in the calm blue nights,
To roam through the cool sea-caves :

Last summer he came, when the stars were shining,
To walk by the lone sea-waves.

III.

There is no light in the gray sea-groves
Like the light on his golden hair :
There be no sweetnesses known to the sea-folk
So sweet as his kisses were.

IV.

I love him, love him, ah, so well
That my love hath grown pain in me,
And to-morrow he weds the Princess, yonder
In that palace beside the sea.

SEA-SIDE ELEGIACS.

EVER my heart beateth high and the blood in me
danceth delighted,
When, in the wind on the wharf, keen from the
edge of the land,
Watching the white-wingèd black-bodied ships, as
they rise uninvited
Over the violet-dark wall o' the waters, I stand.
Wondrous with life that is in them, aware of the
waters and weathers,
They to the populous port pass with a will of
their own.

Merrily singeth the mariner there, 'as the cable he
tethers

Tight to the huge iron ring, hung in the green
glewy stone.

Swept with the spray is the pavement above; and
the sea-wind is salt there.

Down on the causeys all day, humming, the mer-
chants unlade

Marvellous merchandise, while the sea-engines of
burthen, at halt there,

Shoulder each other, and loll, lazy in shine or in
shade.

O for the wing o' the gray sea-eagle, that far away
inland

Croucheth in cave or in creek, waiting the wind
on the height!

When night cometh, the great north-wind, blowing
bleak over Finland,

Leapeth, and, lifting aloft, beareth him into the
night.

O for the wing o' the bird! and O for the wind o'
the ocean!

O for the far-way lands! O for the faces unfound!
Would I were hence! for my spirit is fill'd with a
mighty emotion.

Why must the spirit, though wing'd, thus to the
body be bound?

Ah, but my heart sinketh low, and the rapturous
vein is arrested,

When, at the mid o' the night, high on the sha-
dowy land,

Mournfully watching the ghost-white waves, livid-
lipp'd, hollow-breasted,

Sob over shingle and shell, here with my sorrow
I stand.

Weary of woe that is in them, fatigued by the violent
weathers,

Feebly they tumble and toss, sadly they murmur
and moan.

Coldly the moon looketh down through the wan-
rolling vapour she gathers

Silently, cloud after cloud, round her companion-
less throne.

Dark up above is the wharf ; and the harbour. The
night-wind alone there

Goeth about in the night, humming a horrible song.
Black misshapen bulks, coil'd cumbrous things, over-
thrown there,

Seem as, in sullen dismay, silently suffering wrong.
O for the wing o' the gray sea-eagle, roamer of heaven !

Him doth the wind o' the night bear through the
night on its breast,

Over the howling ocean, and unto his ancient haven,
Far in the land that he loves finding the realms
of his rest.

O for the wing o' the bird ! and O for the wind o'
the ocean !

O for the lands that are left ! O for the faces of
eld !

Would I were hence ! for my spirit is fill'd with a
mournful emotion.

Why must the spirit, though wing'd, still by the
body be held ?

A NIGHT IN THE FISHERMAN'S HUT.

If the wind had been blowing the Devil this way
The midnight could scarcely have grown more unholy,
Or the sea have found secrets more wicked to say
To the toothless old crags it is hiding there wholly.

II.

I love well the darkness. I love well the sound
Of the thunder-drift, howling this way over ocean :
For 'tis though as in nature my spirit had found
A trouble akin to its own fierce emotion.

III.

The hoarse night may howl herself silent for me !
When the silence comes, then comes the howling
within.
I am drench'd to my knees in the surf of the sea,
And wet with the salt bitter rain to the skin.

IV.

Let it thunder and lighten ! this world's ruin'd angel
Is but fool'd by desire like the frailest of men ;
Both seek in hysterics life's awful evangel,
Then both settle down to life's silence again.

V.

Well I know the wild spirits of water and air,
When the lean morrow turns up his cynical grey,

Will, baffled, revert with familiar despair
To their old listless work, in their old helpless way.

VI.

Yonder's the light in the Fisherman's hut :
But the old wolf himself is, I know, off at sea ;
And I see through the chinks, though the shutters
be shut,
By the firelight that some one is watching for me.

VII.

Hark ! the horses of ocean that crouch at my feet,
They are moaning in impotent pain on the beach !
Lo ! the storm-light, that swathes in its blue wind-
ing-sheet
That lone desert of sky, where the stars are dead,
each !

VIII.

Holloa, there ! open, you little wild girl !
Hush, . . . 'tis her soft feet over the floor.
Stay not to tie up a single dark curl,
But quick with the candle, and open the door.

IX.

One kiss ? . . . there's twenty ! . . . but first, take my
coat there,
Salt as a sea-sponge, and dripping all through.
The old wolf, your father, is out in the boat there.
Hark to the thunder ! . . . we're safe,—I and you.

X.

Put on the kettle. And now for the cask
Of that famous old rum of your father's, the king
Would have claw'd on our frontier. There, fill me
the flask.
Ah, what a quick, little, neat-handed thing !

XI.

There's my pipe. Stuff it with black negro-head.
Soon I shall be in the cloud-land of glory.
Faith, 'tis better with you, Dear, than 'fore the mast-
head,
With such lights at the windows of night's upper
story !

XII.

Next, over the round open hole in the shutter
You may pin up your shawl, . . . lest a mermaid
should peep.
Come, now, the kettle's beginning to splutter,
And the cat recomposes herself into sleep.

XIII.

Poor little naked feet, . . . put them up there
On the black bearskin ; and now nestle here
Your head on my shoulder ; while all the dark hair
Falls round us like seaweed, the tender warm ear

XIV.

Pink as a sea-shell, between it out-peeping.
What shall we do with this long windy night ?
It is all of it ours, choose we waking or sleeping ;
To talk, or be still,—in the dark or the light.

XV.

Will you sing to me songs ? shall I tell to you stories ?
 Shall the stories, the songs, be of mirth or of woe ?
 Of Fairyland fair, with its far-away glories ?
 Or the loves of young lovers who died long ago ?

XVI.

We have time for each choice. Take the cards from
 the cupboard,
 Thumb'd over by every old thief in our crew,
 And I'll tell you your fortune, you little Dame Hub-
 bard ;
 My own has been squander'd on witches like you.

XVII.

Knave, King, and Queen, all the villanous pack of 'em,
 I know what they're worth in the game, and have
 found
 Upon all the trump-cards the small mark at the back
 of 'em,
 The Devil's nail mark, who still cheats us all round.

CONTRABAND.

I.

A HEAP of low, dark, rocky coast,
 Where the blue-black sea sleeps smooth and even :
 And the sun, just over the reefs at most,
 In the amber part of a pale blue heaven :

II.

A village asleep below the pines,
Hid up the gray shore from the low slow sun :
And a maiden that lingers among the vines,
With her feet in the dews, and her locks undone :

III.

The half-moon melting out of the sky ;
And, just to be seen still, a star here, a star there,
Faint, high up in the heart of the heaven ; so high
And so faint, you can scarcely be sure that they
are there :

IV.

And one of that small, black, raking craft ;
Two swivel guns on a round deck handy ;
And a great sloop sail with the wind abaft ;
And four brown thieves round a cask of brandy.

V.

That's my life, as I left it last.
And what it may be henceforth I know not.
But all that I keep of the merry Past,
Are trifles like these, which I care to show not :—

VI.

A leathern flask, and a necklace of pearl ;
These rusty pistols, this tatter'd chart, Friend :
And the soft dark half of a raven curl ;
And, at evening, the thought of a true, true heart,
Friend.

HOW THE SONG WAS MADE.

I.

I SAT low down, at midnight, in a vale
 Mysterious with the silence of blue pines :
 White-cloven by a snaky river-tail,
 Uncoil'd from tangled wefts of silver twines.

II.

Out of a crumbling castle, on a spike
 Of splinter'd rock, a mile of changeless shade
 Gorged half the landscape. Down a dismal dyke
 Of black hills the sluiced moonbeams streamed,
 and staid.

III.

I pluck'd blue mugwort, livid mandrakes, balls
 Of blossom'd nightshade, heads of hemlock, long
 White grasses, grown in oozy intervals
 Of marsh, to make ingredients for a song :

IV.

A song of mourning to embalm the Past—
 The corpse-cold Past—that it should not decay ;
 But in dark vaults of Memory, to the last,
 Endure unchanged : for in some future day

V.

I will bring my new love to look at it
 (Laying aside her gay robes for a moment)
That, seeing what love came to, she may sit
 Silent awhile, and muse, but make no comment.

À L'ENTRESOL.

I.

His graven circle of golden hours
 The creeping hand of the Time-piece, there
In yon bower of milk-white china flowers,
 Hath rounded unaware :

II.

While the firelight, flung from the pictured wall
 On the large and limpid mirror behind,
Hath redden'd and darken'd down o'er all,
 As the fire itself declined.

III.

Something of pleasure, and something of pain
 There lived in that sinking light. What is it?
Faces I never shall look at again,
 In places you never will visit,

IV.

Grew out of the glow of each ardent ember,
While, under a palely-wavering flame,
Half of the years life aches to remember
Reappeared, and died as they came.

V.

To its dark Forever an hour hath gone
Since either you or I have spoken :
Each of us might have been sitting alone
In a silence so unbroken.

VI.

I never shall know what made me look up
(In this cushion'd chair so soft and deep,
By the table where, over the empty cup,
I was leaning, half asleep)

VII.

To catch a gleam on the picture up there
Of the saint in the wilderness under the oak ;
And a light on the brow of the bronze Voltaire,
Like the ghost of a cynical joke :

VIII.

To mark, in each violet, velvet fold
Of the curtains that fall 'twixt room and room,
The dip and dance of the manifold
Shadows of rosy gloom.

IX.

O'er the Rembrandt there—the Caracci here—
Flutter warmly the ruddy and wavering hues ;
And St. Anthony over his book has a leer
At the little French beauty by Greuze :

X.

There—the Leda, weigh'd over her white swan's back,
By the weight of her passionate kiss, ere it falls—
On the ebony cabinet, glittering black
Through its ivory cups and balls :

XI.

Your scissors and thimble, and work laid away,
With its silks, in the scented rose-wood box :
The journals, that tell truth every day ;
And that novel of Paul de Kock's :

XII.

The flowers in the vase, with their bells shut close
In a dream of the far green fields where they grew :
The cards of the visiting people and shows
In that bowl with the sea-green hue :

XIII.

Your shawl, with a queenly droop of its own,
Hanging over the arm of the crimson chair :
And, last—yourself, as silent as stone,
In a flush of the firelight there !

XIV.

I thought you were reading all this time.
 And was it some wonderful page of your book
 Telling of love, with its glory and crime,
 That has left you that sorrowful look?

XV.

For a tear from those dark, deep, humid orbs
 'Neath their lashes, so long, and soft, and sleek,
 All the light in your lustrous eyes absorbs,
 As it trembles over your cheek.

XVI.

Were you thinking how we, sitting side by side,
 Might be dreaming miles and miles apart?
 Or if lips could meet over a gulf so wide
 As separates heart from heart?

XVII.

Ah, well! when time is flown, how it fled
 It is better neither to ask nor tell.
 Leave the dead moments to bury their dead.
 Let us kiss and break the spell!

XVIII.

Come, arm in arm, to the window here;
 Draw by the thick curtain, and see how, to-night,
 In the clear and frosty atmosphere,
 The lamps are burning bright.

XIX.

It is scarcely so cold, but I and you,
With never a friend to find us out,
May stare at the shops for a moment or two,
And wander a while about.

XX.

For when in the crowd we have taken our place,
(—Just two more lives to the mighty street there !)
Knowing no single form or face
Of the men and women we meet there,—

XXI.

Knowing, and known of, none in the whole
Of that crowd all round, but our two selves only,
We shall grow nearer, soul to soul,
Until we feel less lonely.

XXII.

Here are your bonnet and gloves, dear. There—
How stately you look in that long rich shawl !
Put back your beautiful golden hair,
That never a curl may fall.

XXIII.

Stand in the firelight . . . so, . . . as you were—
O my heart, how fearfully like her she seem'd !
Hide me up from my own despair,
And the ghost of a dream I dream'd !

GOING BACK AGAIN.

I.

I DREAM'D that I walk'd in Italy
 When the day was going down,
 By a water that flow'd quite silently
 Through an old dim-lighted town :

II.

Till I came a Palace fair to see :
 Wide open the windows were :
 My love at a window sat, and she
 Beckon'd me up the stair.

III.

I roam'd through many a corridor
 And many a chamber of state :
 I pass'd through many an open door,
 While the day was growing late :

IV.

Till I came to the Bridal Chamber at last,
 All dim in the darkening weather.
 The flowers at the window were talking fast,
 And whispering all together.

V.

The place was so still that I could hear
 Every word that they said :
 They were whispering, busy, and full of fear,
 For somebody there was dead.

VI.

When I came to the little rose-colour'd room,
From the window there flew a bat.
The window was open'd upon the gloom :
My love at the window sat :

VII.

She sat with her guitar on her knee,
But she was not singing a note,
For some one had drawn (ah, who could it be?)
A knife across her throat.

TERRA INCOGNITA.

How sweet it is to sit beside her,
When the hour brings nought that's better!
All day in my thoughts to hide her,
And, with fancies free from fetter,
Half remember, half forget, her.
Just to find her out by times
In my mind, among sweet fancies
Laid away :
In the fall of mournful rhymes ;
In a dream of distant climes ;
In the sights a lonely man sees
At the dropping of the day ;
Grave or gay.

As a maiden sometimes locks
 With old letters, whose contents
 Tears have faded,
 In an old worm-eaten box,
 Some sweet packet of faint scents,
 Silken-braided,
 And forgets it :
 Careless, so I hide
 In my life her love,—
 Fancies on each side,
 Memories heap'd above :—
 There it lies, unspied :
 Nothing frets it.
 On a sudden, when
 Deed, or word, or glance,
 Brings me back again
 To the old romance,
 With what rapture then,—
 When, in its completeness,
 Once my heart hath found it,
 By each sense detected,
 Steals on me the sweetness
 Of the air around it,
 Where it lies neglected !
 Shall I break the charm of this
 In a single minute ?
 For some chance with fuller bliss
 Proffer'd in it ?
 Secrets unscal'd by a kiss,
 Could I win it !
 'Tis so sweet to linger near her,
 Idly so !

Never reckoning, while I hear her
 Whispering low,
If each whisper will make clearer
 Bliss or woe ;
Never roused to hope or fear her
 Yes or No !
What if, seeking something more
 Than before,
All that's given I displace—
 Calm and grace—
Nothing ever can restore,
 As of yore,
 That old quiet face !
Quiet skies in quiet lakes,
 No wind wakes,
 All their beauty double :
But a single pebble breaks
 Lake and sky to trouble ;
Then dissolves the foam it makes
 In a bubble.
With the pebble in my hand,
Here, upon the brink, I stand ;
Meanwhile, standing on the brink,
 Let me think !
Not for her sake, but for mine,
Let those eyes unquestion'd shine,
 Half divine :
Let no hand disturb the rare
Smoothness of that lustrous hair
 Anywhere :
Let that white breast never break

Its calm motion—sleep or wake—

For my sake.

Not for her sake, but for mine,

All I might have I resign.

Should I glow

To the hue—the fragrance fine—

The mere first sight of the wine,

If I drain'd the goblet low?

Who can know?

With her beauty like the snow,

Let her go! Shall I repine

That no idle breath of mine

Melts it? No! 'Tis better so.

All the same, as she came,

With her beauty like the snow,

Cold, unspotted, let her go!

MADAME LA MARQUISE.

I.

THE folds of her wine-dark violet dress

Glow over the sofa, fall on fall,

As she sits in the air of her loveliness

With a smile for each and for all.

II.

Half of her exquisite face in the shade

Which o'er it the screen in her soft hand flings:

Through the gloom glows her hair in its odorous braid:
In the firelight are sparkling her rings.

III.

As she leans,—the slow smile half shut up in her eyes
Beams the sleepy, long, silk-soft lashes beneath ;
Through her crimson lips, stirr'd by her faint replies,
Breaks one gleam of her pearl-white teeth :

IV.

As she leans,—where your eye, by her beauty subdued,
Droops — from under warm fringes of broidery
white
The slightest of feet—silken-slipper'd, protrude,
For one moment, then slip out of sight.

V.

As I bend o'er her bosom, to tell her the news,
The faint scent of her hair, the approach of her
cheek,
The vague warmth of her breath, all my senses suffuse
With HERSELF: and I tremble to speak.

VI.

So she sits in the curtain'd, luxurious light
Of that room, with its porcelain, and pictures, and
flowers,
When the dark day's half done, and the snow flutters
white,
Past the windows in feathery showers.

VII.

All without is so cold,—'neath the low leaden sky!
Down the bald, empty street, like a ghost, the
gendarme

Stalks surly: a distant carriage hums by:—
All within is so bright and so warm !

VIII.

But she drives after noon :—then's the time to behold
her,

With her fair face half hid, like a ripe peeping rose,
'Neath that veil,—o'er the velvets and furs which
enfold her,—

Leaning back with a queenly repose,

IX.

As she glides up the sunlight! . . . You'd say she was
made

To loll back in a carriage, all day, with a smile ;
And at dusk, on a sofa, to lean in the shade
Of soft lamps, and be woo'd for a while.

X.

Could we find out her heart through that velvet and
lace !

Can it beat without ruffling her sumptuous dress?
She will show us her shoulder, her bosom, her face ;
But what the heart's like, we must guess.

XI.

With live women and men to be found in the world—
(—Live with sorrow and sin,—live with pain and
with passion,—)

Who could live with a doll, though its locks should
be curl'd,

And its petticoats trimm'd in the fashion ?

'Tis so fair! . . would my bite, if I bit it, draw blood?
Will it cry if I hurt it? or scold if I kiss?
Is it made, with its beauty, of wax or of wood?
. . . Is it worth while to guess at all this?

AUX ITALIENS.

I.

At Paris it was, at the Opera there ;—
And she look'd like a Queen of old time that night,
With the wreathèd pearls in her raven hair,
And her breast with the diamond bright.

II.

The moon on the tower slept soft as snow:
And who was not thrill'd in the strangest way,
As the Troubadour sung while the gas burn'd low,
'*Non ti scordar di me ?*'

III.

Side by side in our box we sat,
Together, my bride-betroth'd and I :
My gaze was fix'd on my opera-hat,
And hers on the stage hard by :

IV.

And both were silent, and both were sad.
Queenly she lean'd on her full white arm,
With that regal, indolent air she had ;
So confident of her charm !

V.

I have not a doubt she was thinking then
 Of her former lord, good soul that he was !
 Who died the richest, and roundest of men,
 The Marquis of Carabas.

VI.

That narrow gate to the kingdom of heaven,
 He was not too portly, I trust, to pass.
 I wish him well, for the jointure given
 To my lady of Carabas.

VII.

Meanwhile, I was thinking of my first love,
 As I had not been thinking of aught for years,
 Till over my eyes there began to move
 Something that felt like tears.

VIII.

I thought of the dress that she wore last time,
 When we stood, 'neath the cypress trees, together,
 In that lost land, in her own soft clime,
 In the crimson evening weather,

IX.

By the broken wall, on the brown grass plot ;
 And her warm white neck in its golden chain :
 And her full, soft hair, wound into a knot,
 And falling loose again :

X.

And the jasmin-flower in her fair young breast :
 (O the faint, sweet smell of that jasmin-flower !)
And the last bird singing alone to his nest :
 And the first star over the tower.

XI.

I thought of our little quarrels and strife ;
 And the letter that brought me back my ring.
And it all seem'd then, in the waste of life,
 Such a very little thing !

XII.

For I thought of her grave below the hill,
 Which the sentinel cypress tree stands over.
And I thought . . . 'were she only living still,
 How I could forgive her, and love her !'

XIII.

And I swear, as I thought of her thus, in that hour,
 And of how, after all, old things were best,
That I smelt the smell of that jasmin-flower,
 Which she used to wear in her breast.

XIV.

It smelt so faint, and it smelt so sweet,
 It made me creep, and it made me cold !
Like the scent that steals from the crumbling sheet
 Where a mummy is half unroll'd.

XV.

And I turn'd and look'd. She was sitting there
In a dim box, over the stage; and drest
In the dress that I knew, with her full soft hair,
And that jasmin in her breast!

XVI.

She was there : and I was here :
And the glittering horse-shoe curved between :—
And from here to there, and from tier to tier,
From my bride that was to have been,

XVII.

To my early love, with her eyes downcast,
And over her blush-rose face the shade,
(In short from the Future back to the Past)
There was but a step to be made.

XVIII.

To my early love from my future bride
One moment I look'd. Then I stole to the door,
I traversed the passage ; and down at her side
I was sitting, a moment more.

XIX.

My thinking of her, or the music's strain,
Or something that never will be exprest,
Had brought her back from the grave again,
With the jasmin in her breast.

XX.

She is not dead, and she is not wed !

But she loves me now, and she loved me then !
' And the very first word that her sweet lips said,
My heart grew youthful again.

XXI.

The Marchioness there, of Carabas,

She is wealthy, and young, and handsome still,
And but for her . . . well, we'll let that pass,
She may marry whomever she will.

XXII.

But I will marry my own first love,

With her blush-rose face : for old things are best ;
And the flower in her bosom, I prize it above
The brooch in my lady's breast.

XXIII.

The world is fill'd with folly and sin,

And Love must cling where it can, I say :
For Beauty is easy enough to win ;
But one isn't loved every day.

XXIV.

And I think, in the lives of most women and men,
There's a moment when all would go smooth and
even,
If only the dead could find out when
To come back, and be forgiven.

THE CASTLE OF KING MACBETH.

I.

THIS is the castle of King Macbeth.

And here he feasts—when the daylight wanes,
And the moon goes softly over the heath—
His Earls and Thanes.

II.

A hundred harpers with harps of gold

Harp thorough the night high festival :
And the sound of the music they make is roll'd
From hall to hall.

III.

They drink, they sing, till the rafters rock

In the Banquet Hall ; and the shout is borne
To the courts outside, where the crowing cock
Is waked ere morn.

IV.

They sing, they dance, till the raven is stirr'd

On the wicked elm-tree outside in the gloom :
And the rustle of silken robes is heard
From room to room.

V.

But there is one room in that castle old,
In a lonely turret where no one goes,
And a dead man sits there, stark and cold,
Whom no one knows.

THE PORTRAIT.

I.

MIDNIGHT past! Not a sound of aught
Through the silent house, but the wind at his
prayers.
I sat by the dying fire, and thought
Of the dear dead woman upstairs.

II.

A night of tears! for the gusty rain
Had ceased, but the eaves were dripping yet;
And the moon look'd forth, as though in pain,
With her face all white and wet:

III.

Nobody with me, my watch to keep,
But the friend of my bosom, the man I love:
And grief had sent him fast to sleep
In the chamber up above.

IV.

Nobody else, in the country place
All round, that knew of my loss beside,
But the good young Priest with the Raphael-face,
Who confess'd her when she died.

V.

That good young Priest is of gentle nerve,
 And my grief had moved him beyond control ;
 For his lip grew white, as I could observe,
 When he speeded her parting soul.

VI.

I sat by the dreary hearth alone :
 I thought of the pleasant days of yore :
 I said " the staff of my life is gone :
 The woman I love is no more.

VII.

" Gem-clasp'd, on her bosom my portrait lies,
 Which next to her heart she used to wear—
 It is steep'd in the light of her loving eyes,
 And the sweets of her bosom and hair."

VIII.

And I said—" the thing is precious to me :
 They will bury her soon in the churchyard clay ;
 It lies on her heart, and lost must be,
 If I do not take it away."

IX.

I lighted my lamp at the dying flame,
 And crept up the stairs that creak'd for fright,
 Till into the chamber of death I came,
 Where she lay all in white.

X.

The moon shone over her winding-sheet.
There, stark she lay on her carven bed :
Seven burning tapers about her feet,
And seven about her head.

XI.

As I stretch'd my hand, I held my breath ;
I turn'd, as I drew the curtains apart :
I dared not look on the face of death :
I knew where to find her heart.

XII.

I thought, at first, as my touch fell there,
It had warm'd that heart to life, with love ;
For the thing I touch'd was warm, I swear,
And I could feel it move.

XIII.

'Twas the hand of a man, that was moving slow
O'er the heart of the dead,—from the other side :
And at once the sweat broke over my brow,
“Who is robbing the corpse?” I cried.

XIV.

Opposite me, by the tapers' light,
The friend of my bosom, the man I loved,
Stood over the corpse, and all as white,
And neither of us moved.

XV.

“What do you here, my friend?” . . . The man
Look’d first at me, and then at the dead.
“There is a portrait here . . .” he began ;
“There is. It is mine,” I said.

XVI.

Said the friend of my bosom, “yours, no doubt,
The portrait was, till a month ago,
When this suffering angel took that out,
And placed mine there, I know.”

XVII.

“This woman, she loved me well,” said I.
“A month ago,” said my friend to me :
“And in your throat,” I groan’d, “you lie !”
He answer’d . . . “let us see.”

XVIII.

“Enough !” I return’d, “let the dead decide :
And whose soever the portrait prove,
His shall it be, when the cause is tried,
Where Death is arraign’d by Love.”

XIX.

We found the portrait there, in its place :
We open’d it by the tapers’ shine :
The gems were all unchanged : the face
Was—neither his nor mine.

XX.

“One nail drives out another, at least!
The face of the portrait there,” I cried,
“Is our friend’s, the Raphael-faced young Priest,
Who confess’d her when she died.”

THE ALOE.

I.

A STRANGER sent from burning lands,
In realms where buzz and mutter yet
Old gods, with hundred heads and hands,
On jewell’d thrones of jet,—

II.

(Old gods as old as Time himself,)
And, in a hot and heavy calm,
Recline o’er many a sandy shelf
Dusk forms beneath the palm,—

III.

To Lady Eve, who dwells beside
The river-meads, and oak-trees tall,
Whose dewy shades encircle wide
Her old Baronial Hall,

IV.

An Indian plant with leaves like horn,
And, all, along its stubborn spine,

Mere hump^s, with angry spike and thorn
Arm'd, like the porcupine.

V.

In midst of which one sullen bud
Survey'd the world, with head aslant,
High-throned, and looking like the god
Of this strange Indian plant.

VI.

A stubborn plant, from looking cross
It seem'd no kindness could retrieve !
But for his sake whose gift it was
It pleased the Lady Eve.

VII.

She set it on the terraced walk,
Within her own fair garden-ground ;
And every morn and eve its stalk
Was duly water'd round.

VIII.

And every eve and morn, the while
She tended this uncourteous thing,
I stood beside her,—watch'd her smile,
And often heard her sing.

IX.

The roses I at times would twist
To deck her hair, she oft forgot ;
But never that dark aloe miss'd
The daily watering-pot.

X.

She seem'd so gay,—I felt so sad,—
Her laugh but made me frown the more :
For each light word of hers I had
Some sharp reply in store.

XI.

Until she laugh'd . . . “This aloe shows
A kindlier nature than your own” . . .
Ah Eve, you little dream'd what foes
The plant and I had grown !

XII.

At last, one summer night, when all
The garden-flowers were dreaming still,
And still the old Baronial Hall,
The oak-trees on the hill,

XIII.

A loud and sudden sound there stirr'd,
As when a thunder-cloud is torn ;
Such thunder-claps are only heard
When little gods are born.

XIV.

The peacocks scream'd, and every rook
Upon the elms at roost did caw :
Each inmate straight the house forsook :
They search'd—and, last,—they saw

XV.

That sullen bud to flower had burst
 Upon the sharp-leaved aloe there ;—
 A wondrous flower ; whose breath disperst
 Rich odours on the air :

XVI.

A flower, colossal—dazzling white,
 And fair as is a Sphynx's face,
 Turn'd broadly to the moon by night
 From some vast temple's base.

XVII.

Yes, Eve ! your aloe paid the pains
 With which its sullen growth you nurst.
 But, ah ! my nature still remains
 As churlish as at first.

XVIII.

And yet, and yet—it might have proved
 Not all unworth your heart's approving.
 Ah, had I only been beloved,—
 (Beloved as I was loving !)

XIX.

I might have been . . . how much, how much,
 I am not now, and shall not be !
 One gentle look, one tender touch,
 Had done so much for me !

XX.

I too, perchance, if kindly tended,
Had roused this napping generation
With something novel, strange, and splendid,
Deserving admiration :

XXI.

For all the while there grew, and grew
A germ,—a bud, within my bosom :
No flower, fair Eve !—for, thanks to you,
It never came to blossom.

SPRING AND WINTER.

I.

WAS it well in him, if he
Felt not love, to speak of love so ?
If he still unmoved must be,
Was it nobly sought to move so ?
—Pluck the flower, but not to wear it—
Spurn it from him, yet not spare it ?

II.

Need he say that I was fair,
With such meaning in his tone,
Adding ever that her hair
Had the same tinge as my own ?
Pluck my life up, root and bloom,
To make garlands for her tomb ?

III.

And, her eyes, though deep their light,
 Were less deep, he said, than mine,
 And her brow, though white, less white
 Than this blue-vein'd crystalline ;
 But 'twas just that he loved then
 More than he can love again.

IV.

Then, if beauty could not bind him,
 Wherefore praise me, speaking low ?
 Use my face just to remind him
 How no face could please him now ?
 Why, if loving could not move him,
 Did he teach me still to love him ?

V.

“ Yes !” he said, “ he had grown wise now :
 He had suffer'd much of yore :
 But a fair face to his eyes now,
 Was a fair face, and no more.
 Yet the anguish and the bliss,
 And the dream too, had been his.”

VI.

Ah, those words a thought too tender
 For the common-places spoken !
 Looks whose meaning seem'd to render
 Help to words when speech came broken !
 Why so late in July moonlight
 Just to say what's said by noonlight ?

LYRICAL.

VII.

And why praise my youth for gladness,
Keeping something in his smile
That changed all my youth to sadness,
He still smiling all the while?
Since, when so my youth was over,
He said "seek some younger lover!"

VIII.

Well, the Spring's back now! the thrushes
Are astir as heretofore,
And the apple-blossom blushes
As of old about the door.
Does he taste a finer bliss,
I must wonder, in all this,

IX.

(Winning thus what I have lost)
By the usage of my youth?
—I can feel my forehead crost
By the wrinkle's fretful tooth,
While the grey grows in my hair,
And the cold creeps everywhere.

CHANGES.

I.

Would we had met not,—we that might not wed!
Time rules us all. And Life, indeed, is not
The thing we plann'd it out ere hope was dead.
And then, we women cannot choose our lot.

II.

Much must be borne which it is hard to bear :
 Much given away which it were sweet to keep.
 The deed that never hath been done, the tear
 That never hath been wept,—who knows how deep

III.

These lurk in unlived lives? Ourselves behind
 Ourselves we leave, and miss what most we seek :
 In our own memories our graves we find,
 And, when we lean upon our hearts, they break.

My little boy begins to babble now
 Upon my knee his earliest infant prayer.
 He has his father's eager eyes, I know,
 And, they say too, his mother's sunny hair.

V.

But when he sleeps and smiles upon my knee,
 And I can feel his light breath come and go,
 I think of one (God help and pity me !)
 Who loved me, and whom I loved, long ago.

VI.

Who might have been . . . ah, what I dare not think !
 The thing which must be, must be for the best.
 God help us do our duty, and not shrink,
 And trust in Heaven humbly for the rest.

VII.

But blame us women not, if some appear
 Too cold at times ; and some too gay and light.
 The life unlived, the deed undone, the tear
 Unshed, . . . not judging these, who judges right ?

VIII.

Were we but judged by what we might have been,
 And not by what we are, too apt to fall !
 My little child—he sleeps and smiles between
 These thoughts and me. In Heaven we shall
 know all !

THE WIFE'S TRAGEDY.

TAKE the diamonds from my hair !
 Take the flowers from the urn !
 Fling the lattice wide ! more air !
 Air—more air, or else I burn !
 Put the bracelets by. And thrust
 Out of sight these hated pearls.
 I could trample them to dust,
 Though they *were* his gift, the Earl's !
 Flusht I am ? The dance it was.
 Only that. Now leave me, Sweet.
 Take the flowers, girl, because
 They will wither in this heat.

Good night, dearest ! Leave the door
 Half-way open as you go.
 —Oh, thank God ! . . . Alone once more.
 Am I dreaming ? . . . dreaming ? . . . no !
 Still that music underneath
 Works to madness in my brain.
 Even the roses seem to breathe
 Poison'd perfumes, full of pain.
 Let me think . . . my head is aching.
 I have little strength to think.
 And I know my heart is breaking.
 Yet, O love, I will not shrink !
 Ah, the night is bright and still
 Over all the fields I know :
 And the chestnuts on the hill :
 And the quiet lake below.
 By that lake I yet remember
 How, last year, we stood together
 One wild eve in warm September
 Bright with thunder : not a feather
 Stirr'd the slumbrous swans that floated
 Past the reed-beds, husht and white :
 Towers of sultry cloud hung moated
 In the lake's unshaken light :
 Far behind us all the extensive
 Woodland blacken'd against heaven :
 And we spake not :—pausing pensive :
 Till the thunder-cloud was riven,
 And the black wood whiten'd under,
 And the storm began to roll,
 And the love laid up like thunder
 Burst at once upon my soul.

Through warm widths of glowing weather,
Past sweet tracts of crimson light,
Down the sunset lost together,
Far athwart the summer night.
“Canst thou make such life thy choice,
My heart’s own, my chosen one?”
So he whisper’d, and his voice
Had such magic in its tone!
But one hour ago we parted.
And we meet again to-morrow.
Parted—silent, and sad-hearted:
And we meet—in guilt and sorrow.
But we *shall* meet . . . meet, O God,
To part never . . . the last time!
Yes! the Ordeal shall be trod.
Burning ploughshares—love and crime!
Oh with him, with him to wander
Through the wide world—only his!
Heart, and hope, and Heaven to squander
On the wild wealth of his kiss!

Then? . . . like these poor flowers that wither
 In my bosom, to be thrown
 Lightly from him any whither
 When the sweetness all is flown!
 Yes, I know it all, my fate!
 But the gulf is crost for ever,
 And regret is born too late.
 The shut Past re-opens never.
 Safe, within his smile (*his* smile!)
 Smiles less kind I shall not see.
 Let the whole wide world revile,
 He is all the world to me.
 All the world . . . Ah, me! my child—
 My own fair-hair'd, darling boy!
 In his sleep just now he smiled,
 Dreaming innocentest joy.
 How those soft long lashes shade
 That young cheek so husht and warm,
 Like a half-blown rosebud laid
 On the little dimpled arm!
 He will wake without a mother.
 He will hate me when he hears
 From the cold lips of another
 All my faults in after years.
 None will tell the deep devotion
 Wherewith I have brooded o'er
 His young life, since its first motion
 Made me hope and pray once more.
 On my breast he smiled and slept,
 Smiled between my wrongs and me,
 Till the weak warm tears I wept
 Set my dry, coil'd nature free.

Nay, . . . my feverish kiss would wake him.

How can I dare bless his sleep?

They will change him soon, and make him

Like themselves that never weep;

Fitted to the world's bad part :

Yet, will all their wealth afford him

Aught more rich than this lost heart

Whose last anguish yearns toward him?

Ah, there's none will love him then

As I love, that leave him now !

He will mix with selfish men.

Yes, he has his father's brow !

Lie thou there, thou poor rose-blossom,

In that little hand more light

Than upon this restless bosom,

Whose last gift is given to-night.

O love ! love ! but this is bitter !

O that we had never met !

O but hate than love were fitter !

And He too may hate me yet.

Yet to him have I not given

All life's sweetness ? . . . fame ? and name ?

Hope ? and happiness ? and Heaven ?

Can he hate me for my shame ?

"Sweet in novel lands," he said,

"Day by day to share delight;

On by soft surprises led,

And together rest at night.

So from coast to coast we'll range,

Growing nearer as we move

On our charm'd way; each soft change

Only deepening changeless love."

'Twas the dream which I, too, dream'd
Once,—long since,—in days of yore.
Life's long-faded fancies seem'd
At his words to bloom once more.
The old hope, the wreckt belief,
The lost light of vanisht years,
Ere my heart was worn with grief,
Or my eyes were dimm'd with tears !
When a careless girl I clung
With proud trust to my own powers :—
Ah, long since I, too, was young,
I, too, dream'd of happy hours !
Ha ! the long night wears away.
Yon cold drowsy star grows dim.
The long fear'd, long wisht-for, day
Comes, when I shall fly with him.
In the laurel wakes the thrush.
Through these dreaming chambers wide
Not a sound is stirring. Hush !
—Oh, it was my child that cried !

THE LAST REMONSTRANCE.

I.

YES ! I am worse than thou didst once believe me.
Worse than thou deem'st me now I cannot be—
But say "the Fiend's no blacker," . . . canst thou
leave me ?
Where wilt thou flee ?

II.

Where wilt thou bear the relics of the days
Squander'd round this dethronèd love of thine?
Hast thou the silver and the gold to raise
A new god's shrine?

III.

Thy cheek hath lost its roundness and its bloom.
Who will forgive those signs where tears have fed
On thy once lustrous eyes,—save *he* for whom
Those tears were shed?

IV.

Know I not every grief whose course hath sown
Lines on thy brow, and silver in thy hair?
Will new love learn the language, mine alone
Hath graven there?

V.

Despite the blemisht beauty of thy brow
Thou wouldst be lovely, couldst thou love again;
For Love renews the Beautiful: but thou
Hast only pain.

VI.

How wilt thou bear from pity to implore
What once those eyes from rapture could command?
How wilt thou stretch,—who wast a Queen of yore,—
A suppliant's hand?

VII.

Even were thy heart content from love to ask
 No more than needs to keep it from the chill,
 Hast thou the strength to recommence the task
 Of pardoning still?

VIII.

Wilt thou to one, exacting all that I
 Have lost the right to ask for, still extend
 Forgiveness on forgiveness, with that sigh
 That dreads the end?

IX.

Ah, if thy heart can pardon yet, why yet
 Should not its latest pardon be for me?
 For who will bend, the boon he seeks to get,
 On lowlier knee?

X.

Where wilt thou find the unworthier heart than
 mine,
 That it may be more grateful, or more lowly?
 To whom else, pardoning much, become divine
 By pardoning wholly?

XI.

Hath not thy forehead paled beneath my kiss?
 And through thy life have I not writ my name?
 Hath not my soul sign'd thine? . . . I gave thee bliss,
 If I gave shame :

XII.

The shame, but not the bliss, where'er thou goest,
Will haunt thee yet: to me no shame thou hast:
To me alone, what now thou art, thou knowest
By what thou wast.

XIII.

If, faring on together, I have fed
Thy lips on poisons, they were sweet at least:
Nor couldst thou thrive where holier Love hath spread
His simpler feast.

XIV.

Change would be death. Could severance from my
side
Bring thee repose, I would not bid thee stay.
My love should meet, as mutely as my pride,
That parting day.

XV.

It may not be; for thou couldst not forget me—
Not that my own is more than other natures,
But that 'tis different: and thou wouldst regret me
'Mid purer creatures.

XVI.

Then, if love's first ideal now grows wan,
And thou wilt love again,—again love me,
For what I am;—no hero, but a man
Still loving thee.

THE CHESS-BOARD.

DEAR little fool, do you remember,

Ere we were grown so sadly wise,
Those evenings in the bleak December,
Curtain'd warm from the snowy weather,
When you and I play'd chess together,
Checkmated by each other's eyes?

Ah, still I see your soft white hand
Hovering warm o'er Queen and Knight.

Brave Pawns in valiant battle stand :
The double Castles guard the wings :
The Bishop, bent on distant things,
Moves, sidling, through the fight.

Our fingers touch ; our glances meet,
And falter ; falls your golden hair
Against my cheek ; your bosom sweet
Is heaving. Down the field, your Queen
Rides slow her soldiery all between,
And checks me unaware.

Ah me ! the little battle's done,
Disperst is all its chivalry ;
Full many a move, since then, have we
'Mid Life's perplexing chequers made,
And many a game with Fortune play'd,—

What is it we have won ?

This, this at least—if this alone ;—
That never, never, never more,
As in those old still nights of yore,

(Ere we were grown so sadly wise) ·
Can you and I shut out the skies,
Shut out the world, and wintry weather,
And, eyes exchanging warmth with eyes,
Play chess, as then we play'd, together !

RETROSPECTIONS.

I.

TO-NIGHT she will dance at the Palace,
With the diamonds in her hair :
And the Prince will praise her beauty—
The loveliest lady there !

II.

But tones, at times, in the music
Will bring back forgotten things :
And her heart will fail her sometimes,
When her beauty is praised at the King's

III.

There sits in his silent chamber
A stern and sorrowful man :
But a strange sweet dream comes to him,
While the lamp is burning wan,

IV.

Of a sunset among the vineyards
In a lone and lovely land,
And a maiden standing near him,
With fresh wild-flowers in her hand.

V.

To-night she will dance at the Palace,
 With the diamonds in her hair :
 And the Prince will praise her beauty-
 The loveliest lady there !

THY VOICE ACROSS MY SPIRIT FALLS.

THY voice across my spirit falls
 Like some spent sea-wind through dim halls
 Of ocean-kings, left bare and wide
 (Green floors o'er which the sea-weed crawls !)
 Where once, long since, in festal pride
 Some Chief, who roved and ruled the tide,
 Among his brethren reign'd and died.

I dare not meet thine eyes ; for so,
 In gazing there, I seem once more
 To lapse away through days of yore
 To homes where laugh and song is o'er,
 Whose inmates each went long ago—

Like some lost soul, that keeps the semblance
 On its brow of ancient grace
 Not all faded, wandering back
 To silent chambers, in the track
 Of the twilight, from the Place
 Of retributive Remembrance.

Ah, turn aside those looks again.
Their light hath less of joy than pain.
We are not now what we were then.

A S T A R T E.

I.

WHEN the latest strife is lost, and all is done with,
Ere we slumber in the spirit and the brain,
We drowse back, in dreams, to days that life begun
with,
And their tender light returns to us again.

II.

I have cast away the tangle and the torment
Of the cords that bound my life up in a mesh :
And the pulse begins to throb that long lay dormant
'Neath their pressure ; and the old wounds bleed
afresh.

III.

I am touch'd again with shades of early sadness,
Like the summer-cloud's light shadow in my hair :
I am thrill'd again with breaths of boyish gladness,
Like the scent of some last primrose on the air.

IV.

And again she comes, with all her silent graces,
The lost woman of my youth, yet unpossess :
And her cold face so unlike the other faces
Of the women whose dead lips I since have prest.

V.

The motion and the fragrance of her garments
Seem about me, all the day long, in the room :
And her face with its bewildering old endearments,
Comes at night, between the curtains, in the gloom.

VI.

When vain dreams are stirr'd with sighing, near the
morning,
To my own her phantom lips I feel approach :
And her smile, at eve, breaks o'er me without warning
From its speechless, pale, perpetual reproach.

VII.

While life's dawning glimmer yet had all the tint
there
Of the orient, in the freshness of the grass,
(Ah what feet since then have trodden out the print
there !)
Did her soft, her silent footsteps fall, and pass :

VIII.

They fell lightly, as the dew falls, 'mid ungather'd
Meadow-flowers ; and lightly linger'd with the dew.
But the dew is gone, the grass is dried and wither'd,
And the traces of those steps have faded too.

IX.

Other footsteps fall about me—faint, uncertain,
In the shadow of the world, as it recedes :
Other forms peer through the half-uplifted curtain
Of that mystery which hangs behind the creeds.

X.

What is gone is gone for ever. And new fashions
May replace old forms which nothing can restore :
But I turn from sighing back departed passions
With that pining at the bosom as of yore.

XI.

I remember to have murmur'd, morn and even,
"Though the Earth dispart these Earthlies, face
from face,
Yet the Heavenlies shall surely join in Heaven,
For the spirit hath no bonds in time or space :

XII.

"Where it listeth, there it bloweth : all existence
Is its region ; and it houseth, where it will.
I shall feel her through immeasurable distance,
And grow nearer, and be gather'd to her, still.

XIII.

"If I fail to find her out by her gold tresses,
Brows, and breast, and lips, and language of sweet
strains,
I shall know her by the traces of dead kisses,
And that portion of myself which she retains."

XIV.

But my being is confused with new experience,
And changed to something other than it was ;
And the Future with the Past is set at variance ;
And Life falters 'neath the burthens which it has.

XV.

Earth's old sins press fast behind me, weakly wailing :
Faint before me fleets the good I have not done :
And my search for her may still be unavailing
'Mid the spirits that are pass'd beyond the sun.

THE NEGLECTED HEART.

THIS heart you would not have,
I laid up in a grave
Of song : with love enwound it ;
And set sweet fancies blowing round it.

Then I to others gave it ;
Because you would not have it.
" See you keep it well," I said ;
" This heart's sleeping—is not dead ;
But will wake some future day :
See you keep it while you may."

All great Sorrows in the world,—
Some with crowns upon their heads,
And in regal purple furl'd ;
Some with rosaries and beads ;
Some with lips of scorning, curl'd
At false Fortune ; some, in weeds

Of mourning and of widowhood,
Standing tearful and apart—

**You bethought you then . . . “ Ah me,
What if this heart, I did not choose
To retain, hath found the key
Of the kingdom ? and I lose
A great power ? Me he gave it :
Mine the right, and I will have it.”**

**Ah, too late ! For crowds exclaim’d
“ Ours it is : and hath been claim’d.
Moreover, where it lies, the spot
Is holy ground : so enter not.**

None but men of mournful mind—
 Men to darken'd days resign'd ;
 Equal scorn of Saint and Devil ;
 Poor and outcast ; halt and blind ;
 Exiles from Life's golden revel ;
 Gnawing at the bitter rind
 Of old griefs ; or else, confined
 In proud cares, to serve and grind,—
 May enter : whom this heart shall cure.
 But go thou by : ' thou art not poor :
 Nor defrauded of thy lot :
 Bless thyself : but enter not !"

APPEARANCES.

WELL, you have learn'd to smile.
 And no one looks for traces
 Of tears about your eyes.
 Your face is like most faces.
 And who will ask, meanwhile,
 If your face your heart belies ?
 Are you happy ? You look so.
 Well, I wish you what you seem.
 Happy persons sleep so light !
 In your sleep you never dream ?
 But who could care to know
 What dreams you dream'd last night ?

LYRICAL.

PART III.

II.

God's glory lies not out of reach.
The moss we crush beneath our feet,
The pebbles on the wet sea-beach,
Have solemn meanings strange and sweet.

III.

The peasant at his cottage door
May teach thee more than Plato knew :
See that thou scorn him not : adore
God in him, and thy nature too.

IV.

Know well thy friends. The woodbine's breath,
The woolly tendril on the vine,
Are more to thee than Cato's death,
Or Cicero's words to Catiline.

V.

The wild rose is thy next in blood :
Share Nature with her, and thy heart.
The kingcups are thy sisterhood :
Consult them duly on thine art.

VI.

Nor cross the sea for gems. Nor seek :
Be sought. Fear not to dwell alone.
Possess thyself. Be proudly-meek.
See thou be worthy to be known.

VII.

The Genius on thy daily ways
Shall meet, and take thee by the hand :
But serve him not as who obeys :
He is thy slave if thou command.

VIII.

Be quiet. Take things as they come :
Each hour will draw out some surprise.
With blessing let the days go home :
Thou shalt have thanks from evening skies.

IX.

Lean not on one mind constantly :
Lest, where one stood before, two fall.
Something God hath to say to thee
Worth hearing from the lips of all.

X.

All things are thine estate : yet must
 Thou first display the title-deeds,
 And sue the world. Be strong : and trust
 High instincts more than all the creeds.

XI.

Assert thyself : and by-and-by
 The world will come and lean on thee.
 But seek not praise of men : thereby
 Shall false shows cheat thee. Boldly be.

XII.

Each man was worthy at the first :
 God spake to us ere we were born :
 But we forget. The land is curst :
 We plant the briar, reap the thorn.

XIII.

Remember, every soul He made
 Is different : has some deed to do,
 Some work to work. Be undismay'd,
 Though thine be humble : do it too.

XIV.

Not all the wisdom of the schools
 Is wise for thee. Hast thou to speak ?
 No man hath spoken for thee. Rules
 Are well : but never fear to break

XV.

The scaffolding of other souls :
It was not meant for thee to mount ;
Though it may serve thee. Separate wholes
Make up the sum of God's account :

XVI.

Earth's number-scale is near us set ;
The total God alone can see ;
But each some fraction : shall I fret
If you see Four where I saw Three ?

XVII.

A unit's loss the sum would mar ;
Therefore if I have One or Two,
I am as rich as others are,
And help the whole as well as you.

XVIII.

This wild white rose-bud in my hand
Hath meanings meant for me alone,
Which no one else can understand :
To you it breathes with alter'd tone :

XIX.

How shall I class its properties
For you ? or its wise whisperings
Interpret ? Other ears and eyes
It teaches many other things.

XX.

We number daisies, fringe and star :
 We count the cinquoils and the poppies :
 We know not what they mean. We are
 Degenerate copyists of copies.

XXI.

We go to Nature, not as lords,
 But servants : and she treats us thus :
 Speaks to us with indifferent words,
 And from a distance looks at us.

XXII.

Let us go boldly, as we ought,
 And say to her, " We are a part
 Of that supreme original Thought
 Which did conceive thee what thou art "

XXIII.

" We will not have this lofty look :
 Thou shalt fall down, and recognize
 Thy kings : we will write in thy book,
 Command thee with our eyes."

XXIV.

Nor serve the subject overmuch :
 Nor rhythm and rhyme, nor colour and form :
 Know Truth hath all great graces, such
 As shall with these thy work inform.

XXV.

We ransack History's tatter'd page :
We prate of epoch and costume :
Call this, and that, the Classic Age :
Choose tunic now, now helm and plume :

XXVI.

But while we halt in weak debate
'Twixt that and this appropriate theme,
The offended wild-flowers stare and wait,
The bird hoots at us from the stream.

XXVII.

Next, as to laws. What's beautiful
We recognize in form and face :
And judge it thus, and thus, by rule,
As perfect law brings perfect grace :

XXVIII.

If through the effect we drag the cause,
Dissect, divide, anatomize,
Results are lost in loathsome laws,
And all the ancient beauty dies :

XXIX.

Till we, instead of bloom and light,
See only sinews, nerves, and veins :
Nor will the effect and cause unite,
For one is lost if one remains :

XXX.

But from some higher point behold
 This dense, perplexing complication ;
 And laws involved in laws unfold,
 And orb into thy^s contemplation.

XXXI.

God, when he made the seed, conceived
 The flower ; and all the work of sun
 And rain, before the stem was leaved,
 In that prenatal thought was done :

XXXII.

The girl who twines in her soft hair
 The orange-flower, with love's devotion,
 By the mere act of being fair
 Sets countless laws of life in motion :

XXXIII.

To thine Idea its own fate
 Surrender : so shalt thou fulfil
 All laws of art. Create ! create !
 Dissection leaves the dead dead still.

XXXIV.

Burn catalogues. Write thine own books.
 What need to pore o'er Greece and Rome ?
 When whoso through his own life looks
 Shall find that he is fully come

XXXV.

Through Greece and Rome, and Middle-Age :
Hath been by turns, ere yet full-grown,
Soldier, and Senator, and Sage,
And worn the tunic and the gown.

XXXVI.

Cut the world thoroughly to the heart.
The sweet and bitter kernel crack.
Have no half-dealings with thine art.
All heaven is waiting : turn not back.

XXXVII.

If all the world for thee and me
One, and one only, shape possess'd,
What shall I say ? a single tree—
Whereby to typify the rest,

XXXVIII.

And I could imitate the bark
And foliage, both in form and hue,
Or silver-gray, or brown and dark,
Or rough with moss, or wet with dew,

XXXIX.

But thou, with one form in thine eye,
Couldst penetrate all forms, possess
The Archetype, and multiply
A million like it more or less,

XL.

Which were the Artist of us twain?
 The moral's clear to understand.
 Where'er we walk, by hill or plain,
 Is there no mystery on the land?

XLI.

O seize its import, if you can,
 Which miss'd, leaves Nature's self—a clod!
 For Art is Nature made by Man
 To Man the interpreter of God.

FORM.

I.

A MAN walks through a wood
 Admiring what he sees there:
 How blessèd if he could
 Admire, and be at ease there!
 But ah! his admiration he must utilize, or doubt of it.
 So he lops off a branch, resolved to fashion something
 out of it.

II.

As though the thing were not,
 Already ere he take it,
 A something more than what
 His utmost means can make it!
 He knows not what he wants to make: this only
 who shall gainsay?
 Something he must make out of it, since man's a
 maker, men say.

III.

He chisels, chips, and chops,
And carves, as he is able :
Now plans a chair, now stops
And meditates a table.

At length, grown somewhat weary, in the midst of
all his toils, it
Strikes him that, the more he chips and chops, the
more he spoils it.

IV.

He pauses ; wipes the sweat,
Discouraged, from his forehead ;
Casts down his eyes ; and yet
The failure seems more horrid.

But lo you ! in his workshop, having sidled through
the door there,
A little child is playing with the shavings on the
floor there.

V.

And, as they fall self-roll'd,
Each wooden ringlet nearing,
The child hath made, behold !
Out of each a pretty earring.

Friend, that child, to finest uses fitting chances, must
appal you,
Turning accident to ornament,—your rubbish to his
value.

VI.

So we mend God's making,
And so mar it for the most part :
So chance-comers, taking
From the dust what seem'd the lost part

Of our labour, suffer Fancy to sport with it : and the
Muses,
That neglected our endeavour, turn its failure to our
uses.

METHOD.

NATURE, that will not be commanded, never
To arbitrary method hath submitted :
And Time, that tends on Nature, men not ever
Have into liminary system fitted.
We call a year a year, and bid it cover
Three hundred, five, and sixty days. Who'll trust it?
Mere fiction ! Since a fraction still stays over,
And we, to keep our plan, must readjust it.
Even if, within the hundredth of a minute,
We could approach precision, that small fraction
Would still bear our discomfiture within it,
And doom our nicest system to distraction.
Then let us follow Nature, glad and fleeting ;
Since her free footstep not our best trap catches ;
Content to time her progress by the beating
Of her deep bosom, not of our wise watches.

DROPPINGS.

THE leaves that fall on the grassy wall,
And the rain dropping out of the apple tree !
And is it only a passing dream ?
For, I know not why, but these things seem
Just now worth more than the world to me.

Fast the leaves fall on the grassy wall ;
 Fast drops the rain from the apple tree ;
 And, if I could feel what I feel now
 But a moment longer, I think I should know
 More than ever was known, or known will be.

Wherefore? Leaves fall all day on the wall,
 All day drops rain from the apple tree.
 But never before did the leaves and the rain,
 And they doubtless will never, never again,
 Seem about to impart such a secret to me.

Mere leaves that fall on yonder wall !
 Mere rain dropping down out of yonder tree !
 What matter? If Nature has something to say,
 Let her take her own time, let her choose her own
 way,
 So long as at last she will say it to me.

Ah ! but leaves will fall, as now, on the wall,
 And rain, as now, drop from out of the tree,
 Many, many a day, while the chance, I know,
 Is lost ! I have miss'd what, a moment ago,
 The leaves and the rain had confided to me.

ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ.

WELL and good is the doctrine of " Know thyself,"
 And let him obey it, that can, to the letter ;
 Self-ignorance being the veriest fetter
 That ever kept fools in the stocks, no doubt.

But, while the Greek sages lie there on my shelf,
 Why should I scruple to speak my mind out,
 And assert that 'Forget thyself' is a better?
 Self-unconsciousness being, perchance,
 The one thing free from self-ignorance.
 Not by looking within, but by living without,
 This centre of self, shall a man grow wise.
 Let us, leaving ourselves, then, go boldly about,
 And take part in the business of earth and skies :
 For only by knowledge of that which is not
 Thyself shall thyself be learn'd, I wot.
 Woe to the nation, and woe to the age, and woe, woe
 to the man
 That live not outside of themselves ! To them dis-
 solution is near.
 Healthful and happy are they that, promoting the
 infinite plan,
 Are moved with the movement of things, and have
 joy in the general cheer.

PUBLIC OPINION.

IF Conscience be sole regent of man's soul,
 Whose thoughts and will are but her ministers,
 Needs must she disallow the enforced control
 Of thoughts she thinks not, and of wills not hers.
 This Soul-made Conscience is a Queen, whose cold
 Strict sceptre rules her hidden realm, alone ;

That Crowd-made Conscience is a 'harlot bold,
 That's own'd by many, yet is no man's own :
 This Conscience is responsible for one ;
 That Conscience irresponsible for any :
 Wrong done by all men is the deed of none ;
 That's no man's virtue which is made by many :
 Since, therefore, God no Corporate Soul hath made,
 How shall this Corporate Conscience be obey'd ?

INTELLECTUAL ISOLATION.

If that, in passing on thy way, thou find
 Thy boisterous fellow-traveller, the Age,
 Doth vex thee, or neglect thee, O my mind,
 Take comfort, and this fact (that shall assuage
 Resentment, and confirm thy patience) know:—
 This Age is surely passing under ground.
 But, issuing forth of other ages, thou
 Art unto other ages forward bound.

ICH DIEN.

THE proudest knighthood of Christendom once
 (Of its Lord and Master observant)
 Wrote "*I serve*" on its shield. That was ages back :
 But the world has moved forward : and my man Jack
 Is offended now if I, for the nonce,
 Should venture to call him a servant.

THE WORLD'S REVENGE.

AGNES, with the ethereal face
Where Perugino's pathos vies
With mild Correggio's mystic grace
About her soft celestial eyes,
If you talk to her of a husband, sighs,
And shakes her head with a fine disdain.
A maid she is, and will ever remain,
Lest, alas ! in this valley of vanities
Her pure ideal should suffer a stain.
For love is holy, but men are base,
And she scorns to submit to the common case,
Agnes with the ethereal face.

Young Hotspur, he of the fiery soul,
Will be Cæsar or nothing, if I am a seer.
His passionate spirit spurns control.
For a patriot he, and of pride severe,
Which pelf can pay not, nor promise cajole,
Whose haughty heart holds far too dear
The right of its glorious discontent,
To part (whatever the chance, I fear)
With that noble privilege, sole and whole,
For an office, a gift of the government.
Oh, to be a salaried servant, a mere
Paid drudge, no matter how eminent,
In the public mill! . . . to his friends 'tis clear

Natures like his were never meant
For the vulgar go-cart's dull career.
No ! man delights not him, be sure,
—Nor woman either, “ though by your smiling
You seem to think so.” Beauty's lure
By him is scorn'd, with Power's beguiling.

And so Hotspur no more takes a place, nor a post,
Than Agnes a husband, whatever the cost.

O Agnes of the ethereal face,
Perugino brow, and Correggio eyes !
O Hotspur, you of the fiery spirit !
What meanwhile says the world of your noble case ?
'Tis as old, at least, as the earth and skies.
Though that takes nothing away from your merit.
But men and women grow old, alas !
And this is a woeful world, by the mass !
That seizes the near gain, not seeing the far gain.
Oh, what if this wonder should come to pass—
That you, fair Sister, and you, brave Brother,
Who will take nothing now, you generous two,
Though the world itself we offer'd you,
Should end at last by taking each other,
And what else may be got for it, into the bargain ?

TO A WOMAN.

SINCE all that I can ever do for thee
Is to do nothing, may'st thou never see,
Never divine, the all that nothing costeth me !

RELATIVE VALUES.

WHAT ! all Life's waking years vouchsafed for Death's
one moment's sleep ?
Death being the sole price of life, methinks the cost
is cheap.
But ah ! Death's little moment, bought by many and
many a year
Of Life, . . . for this, to me it seems, the price is some-
what dear.

ARISTOCRACY.

To thee be all men heroes : every race
Noble : all women virgins : and each place
A temple. Know thou nothing that is base.

KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM.

MEASURE thy knowledge by the weight of it,
Which is a kind of sorrowfulness. Men
Dig deep, get gold, and judge its value then,
According as the heaviness be great of it.

But love thy wisdom for the lightness of it.
Glad wisdom is not gotten, but is given :
Not dug out of the earth, but dropp'd from Heaven :
Heavenly, not earthly, is the brightness of it.

“THE PITY OF IT.”

PITY to man so human is, we say
“The pitiless man’s most pitiable.” Nay,
Man is, at bottom, such a pitiful elf
That, when he doth his pitying
Deny to every other thing,
He pitieth yet himself.

Older than man, and wiser too,
Dame Nature doeth what to do
God gave her, with nor tear nor sigh.
She sees with an unpiteous eye
The multitudes be born and die,
And all things pass unto the place
Appointed them in time and space.

Loss doth[•] not vex, nor pain deter,
 Nor failure fret, nor trouble stir,
 Nor self-compassion vanquish her.
 How free from love, how free from hate,
 How careless yet how accurate,
 Admitting neither more nor less,
 She looks with unashamed face
 On her own work, and doth possess,
 Firm from the summit to the base,
 Her calm hereditary place
 'Twixt stars and graves; most pitiless,
 Most positive.

And therefore man,
 Whose course hath stray'd since it began
 In searching after happiness,
 For all his vaunting, never can
 Support unpain'd the cruel stress
 Of her immense contentedness.

"Stay!" here my Stoic cries, "I too,
 Who suffer not the sense of pain,
 By sense of pity, to subdue
 My lordom o'er this puling train
 Of passions pent in heart and brain,
 From an unshaken centre view
 The rolling world."

Suppose you do,
 Good friend, and what is all your gain?
 And what, when all is gain'd, are you?
 Not more a god, nor less a brute,

I ween, than all the others are,
 For having made life's organ mute
 Because you found the music jar :
 A brute, I say, no whit less real
 Though brutalized by an ideal.

Whence I deduce, howe'er you frown,
 The weakness of this human creature :
 Since pity is, indeed, the crown,
 The grace and glory of its nature,
 Whose very strength most dwells in this ;
 —Yet pity's self a weakness is.

SIDE BY SIDE.

(FRIEND AND FRIEND.)

MAY we, then, never know each other ?
 Who love each other more, I dare
 Affirm for both, than brother brother,
 Ay ! more, my friend, than they that are
 The children of one mother.

A look—and lo, our natures meet !
 A word—our minds make one reply !
 A touch—our hearts have but one beat !
 And, if we walk together—why
 The same thought guides our feet

The self-same course ! The flower that blows
 A scent unguess'd in hedgerow green,

Slim spiders, ~~where~~ the water throws,
 The starry-weeded stones between,
 Strange light that flits and flows,

Were charged by some sweet spirit, sure,
 (Love's minister, and ours !) to strike
 Our sense with one same joy, allure
 Our hearts, and bless us both alike
 With memories that endure.

True friend ! I know you : and I know
 You know me too. And this is well.
 Yet something seems to lie below
 All knowledge, which is hard to tell.
 The world, where hands let go,

Slips in between. The warmth yet stays
 Where, twelve safe hours ago, no more
 Your soul touch'd mine. But days and days
 Make callous what one day leaves sore,
 Ichoring the wound they graze.

Not ours the change, if change must fall,
 Nor yours the fault, nor mine, my friend !
 Life's love will last : but not love's small
 Sweet hourly lives. That these should end
 It grieves me. That is all.

This is time's curse. Since life began
 It hath been losing love too fast.
 And I would keep, while yet I can,
 Man's faith in love, lest at the last
 I lose love's faith in man.

But something sighs, "Be satisfied.
Ye know no more than ye can know."
And walking, talking, side by side,
It sometimes seems to me as though
Love did to love provide

(How shall I say?) a man, in fine,
A ghostly Third,—who is, indeed,
Not you nor I, though yours and mine;
The creature of our mutual need,
The friend for whom we pine.

You call him Me : I call him You :
Who is not either you nor I :
This phantom friend, whom we pursue,
Released by Love's fine alchemy,
Mere product of us two !

The man that each in each hath sought,
And each within himself hath found :
The being of our separate thought,
To each by his own nature bound,
From his own nature wrought.

Heed well our friend, while yet we may !
There are so many winds about,
And any wind may blow away
Love's airy child. O never doubt
He is the common prey

Of every chance, while love remains :
And every chance which he survives

Is something added to love's gains.
 Comfort our friend whilst yet he lives !
 Dead, what shall pay our pains ?

If cold should kill his heart at last,
 Regret will idly muse, and think
 In at what window blew the blast ?
 Or how we might have stopp'd that chink.
 What mends a moment past ?

(MAN AND WIFE.)

Nay, Sweet ! no thought, not any thought,
 At least not any thought of you,
 But what must thank dear love. Nor aught
 Of love's mistrust between us two
 Can ever creep. Thank God, we keep
 Too close to let thin doubts slip through,

And leave a scar where they divide
 Hearts meant by Heaven to hold together.
 So, soul by soul, as side by side,
 We sit. Thought wanders hither, thither,
 From star to star, yet not so far
 But what, at end of all its tether,

It feels the beating of your heart,
 To which mine bound it long ago.
 Our love is perfect, every part.
 Love's utmost reach'd at last, must so
 Henceforth abide. And, if I sigh'd
 Just now, I scarcely wish to know

The reason why. Who feels love's best,
Must feel love's best can be no more.
We see the bound, no longer guess'd,
But fix'd for ever. Lo, the shore !
On either hand, 'twixt sea and land,
How clear and fine does sight explore

That long-drawn self-determined line
Of difference traced ! My Own, forgive
That, sitting thus, your hand in mine,
Glad that dear God doth let us live
So close, my Own, so almost one,
A thought that wrongs repose should strive

With pure content. So much we are,
Who are no more . . . could I explain !
Ah, the calm sea-coast ! Think, how far
Across the world came land and main,
Endeavouring each to find and reach
The other,—well, and they attain

Here ! And just here, where they unite,
The point of contact seems to be
The point of severance. Left and right,
Here lies the land and there the sea.
They meet from far : they touch : yet are
Still one and one eternally,

With still that touch between—that touch
That joins and yet divides—the shore.
Oh soul to soul, dear love, 'tis much !
Love's utmost gain'd can give no more.
And yet . . . Well, no ! 'tis better so.
Earth still (be glad !) holds Heaven in store.

CYNIPS TERMINALIS.

(A Colloquy.)

NATURALIST.

THERE is a little fly, I know

As one of Nature's tiniest creatures ;

So small, you'd scarce perceive her, though

You search'd all day to find her features

About a certain small green plant,

In corners of the young leaves curl'd ;—

A weed so insignificant

It counts for nothing in the world.

This lady-fly is framed so frail,

The great world holds but that one weed

Her utmost strength can just avail

To pierce, wherein her eggs may breed.

And that one plant comes forth, and flowers,

And falls, so fast, the whole year round

Holds only some few short Spring hours

Wherein his leaves so fine are found,

That their minute inhabitant,

My lady-fly, has strength enough

Her tiny eggs to sheathe and plant

Within their softly-woven stuff.

Yet millions of this fly minute

Spring sprinkles round my idle walk ;

So many, I may not compute

Their numbers on a single stalk :

And all their business here on earth
Is in those few short hours contain'd ;
And generations (death or birth !)
Depend on one occasion gain'd

Or lost in that eternal scramble
For leave to live, that ceases not :—
Just so much time as in my ramble
I squander, while the noon is hot,

With no more heed than how to lose
The unprofitable consciousness
Of what I scarcely care to use,
It seems so short,—an hour, or less !

How wary in the midst of all
Her wondrous toils must Nature be,
To calculate mischance, forestall
The coming hour, and strictly see

That this small fly and that small weed
Find out each other, just in time
To consummate their ends ! Indeed
Among the starry spheres sublime,

Or 'mid the planets poised aloft,
Or in the suns beyond the sun,
I marvel if she be not oft
Half moved in mind to leave undone

These tiny tasks, that claim so much
Forethoughted care, such arduous ways,
Such thrift of time, and render such
Small recompence of human praise,

Rather than, in yon starry dome,
 Whilst kindling kingly orbs to be,
 Break off to meet the claims of some
 Poor hundred lepidopteraë,

Or frolic infusoria
 That, sporting in the stagnant tank,
 Suspend not even a moment's play
 Her unabated care to thank.

For who on earth would mark or miss
 A million Cynips less or more?
 Who, if next year the whole race is
 Extinguish'd quite, will much deplore?

Yet year by year, 'mid summer's sounds
 And scents, when earth her song resumes,
 To find the plant the fly abounds,
 To meet the fly the plant reblooms.

PESSIMIST.

Your Cynips fares (if this be true),
 Whom Nature leaves not in the lurch,
 Better, methinks, than I and you,
 Who, though we lengthen out our search

As many years as moments she,
 Yet miss, perchance, the one great hour,
 And miss the means, whate'er they be,
 To make that ours. The fly, the flower,

They need, and find each other out :
 To these earth's want Heaven's warrant gives :
 We in our shadows grope about
 To seek the substance of our lives.

How many Romeos roam in vain
To reach the Juliet they should find,
Till passion, fret by frustrate pain,
Puts up, perforce, with Rosalind !

NATURALIST.

Nay, friend, the Juliets such men miss,
If they like Rosalinds appear,
Perchance, methinks might answer this :
'The real Romeo is not here.'

PESSIMIST.

Admitted. But admit, both ways,
The same result in man and fly.
The Cynips that survives we praise,
We do not notice those that die.

On both great Nature hath her way,
And works her will in strong or weak.
'Tis Nature that succeeds, not they,—
That miss, or find, the thing they seek.

And could we gaze upon ourselves
In aggregates as vast as these
Not parcell'd out by tens and twelves,
The some few men that each man sees),

Perchance we should not notice then
The failure and the pain of life :
For man, as man, succeeds, though men
Drop daily in man's age-long strife.

What profits if the one that fails
To know the many may succeed,—
Nay, that his special loss avails
By far-off ways the general deed?

What cares the single leaf that, sere
And fallen, lies a cancell'd thing,
To learn that all the woods next year
Will be renew'd with leaves in spring?

If we, as some folks hold belief,
Be but as waves upon a sea,
Or corals in a coral reef,
Merged in the mass howe'er we be,

The individual life not less
Exacts an individual gain,
And feels but in the common stress
An individual joy or pain.

OPTIMIST.

You may be right, you may be wrong :
But, in a circle still revolving,
To me it seems you each prolong
A question there's no hope of solving.

In any case, we three are not
The first to start it. There's a story
Which into this good world hath got
I know not how. A peasant hoary,

Once sitting by the hostel fire,
Across the tankards told it me :
The old man had it from his sire,
And from the village Parson he.

Saint Peter (who of all the saints, you
Know, loves best to loose and bind)
Upon a day, this tale acquaints you,
Had strange misgivings in his mind.

Things might, it seem'd, be better order'd
On earth, where wrong is always sprouting.
(And, once the verge of doubt is border'd,
There is, you know, no end to doubting.)

Reform in most, if not in all,
Departments of the Administration
Of Matters Mundane seem'd to call
At least for prompt consideration.

So spake the Saint. The Lord replied,
"How wondrous wisely every novice
Can talk of things he never tried !
Opinions change when once in office.

To-morrow thou shalt have in charge
—Not all the world and Human Nature,
(No need at first of field so large,)
But simply one small living creature.

To one mere life of my creation,
My Servant, for one day devote
Thy genius for administration.
Be Providence to yonder goat."

The Saint, next morn, the mandate praising,
Sits down upon the mountain-tops,
And kindly eyes the creature grazing.
The goat the mountain-grasses crops :

Anon, a greener[•] tuft entices
 His hungry eye, and straight he leaps
 Across the dizzy precipices,
 And 'lights upon the hither steeps.

The Saint alarm'd, with deep emotion,
 Leaps after, lest some harm befall
 His charge : meanwhile, without a notion
 That any harm's to fear at all,

The goat his new meal idly munches,
 Nor bleats a Thank-you for the dainty ;
 Then turns to browse the red ash-bunches
 His Providence provides in plenty.

But every goat objects to sameness,
 And peaceful plenty cloy's at last :
 Without adventure ease is tameness :
 Away the wild thing scampers fast :

He scrambles up the pebbly passes :
 He leaps the wild ravines : in vain
 To woo him wave the choicest grasses :
 He nibbles, and is off again :

The Saint, though somewhat sorely winded,
 Runs, climbs, or crawls, as best he may,
 With anxious heart, and fearful-minded :
 The goat, ungrateful, darts away :

The good Saint Peter, puffing, blowing,
 All out of breath behind him follows :
 At noon the sun is fiercely glowing :
 The creature will not keep the hollows.

At length, his hands in anguish¹ clasping,
O'ercome with toil and consternation,
The Saint sinks down, and, fairly gasping,
Resigns the Goat-administration.

"Take back, O Lord, this wilful creature,
And from its whimsies set me free.
I abdicate my usurpature,
And own the task's too much for me!"

Well, in our world of men of letters,
Who all talk finer than they think,
What, if my peasant's learnèd betters,
Who praise the Lord with pen and ink,

Denounce his well-meant homely fable?
Sweet root hath sometimes roughest stalk.
Thy health, old friend, across the table!
Thy thoughts were finer than thy talk.

In that rude garb the poor man gave it,
I tell the tale the poor man told,
Revering, what from blame may save it,
The reverent thought the rude words hold.

WALKING TO THE TOWN.

As I walk to the Town
Now the hedges are blown,
And the white-thorn is thick on the air,
And young butterflies hoist
Milk-white sails from the moist
Open-mouth'd buttercups here and there,

While the high-shoulder'd grig,
Whose great heart is too big
For his body this blue May morn,
Screams out of the spikes
Of the grass, as he strikes
At the stalks of the emerald corn,—

I say, as I walk
To the Town, and talk
To myself, with, now and then,
A good word as I go
To the flowers that I know,
And now to the women and men,
(For the waggoner plods
By his team, and nods,
And the girl tripping over the stile,
Laughing shy, turning back
On the lone meadow track,
Leaves the sweet air more sweet for her smile,)

How little I care,
While the weather holds fair,
What Europe may do with To-day !
If 'tis war be the chance,
Or the sphynx that's in France,
For once let the chance slip away.

Let the merchants be stirr'd
By the ghost of a word
Dropt in Paris, and caught up elsewhere,
Or a manikin Duke
Laugh to scorn the rebuke
Of the Berlin grandees, . . . need I care ?

But how much shall I care
If some cloud unaware
 (And the sky is not cloudless all)
Should ruin and stain
With one smear of blue rain
 Those meads basking under the wall !

How much if, alas !
In the field yet to pass
 The wind should blow round to the south,
And so blow away
The tost balm of the hay
 From my forehead, and eyes, and mouth !

Oh, your great folks grow gray
Making plans every way
 Man's bliss to contrive and devise,
While your small folks, that live
As they can, still contrive
 To be happy, you see, by surprise.

With my whole heart and strength
I am glad that at length
 Yon primrose her green sheath has riven,
Though I stirr'd not, you see,
Hand or foot to set free
 The good gift, which I take as 'tis given.

Will you be at heart
Half as glad, for your part,
 You, the wise ones, so busy to-day,
For the labour'd success
Of those schemes you distress
 All your souls so to bring into play ?

A NEW YEAR'S WISH.

GIVE me this year what's good for me,
Dear God, and chiefly give to see
That all Thou givest is good.

Let me not be afraid of life,
Nor yet too eager for its strife,
But keep an even mood :

Content to take, and to forego :
Ready to do what is to do :
Willing to wait as well :

Glad to begin, whatever way
I must begin it, each good day
That comes with news to tell

Of Thee to me, and sure each night
That I have understood aright
The meaning of each day :
Glad of the glorious gift of eyes :
And loving all the love that lies
About the world alway :

So that the soft sunbeams and showers,
The little leaves and the pure flowers,
And all sweet things that be
In wholesome-minded Nature, still
May help my will to do Thy will,
Nor be ashamed of me.

There's not a cowslip coming up,
Nor any unborn buttercup
In the cold meadow grass,

But what already I am fain
To thank Thee for each drop of rain
That brings such things to pass.

So give me what is good for me
This year, dear God, but most to see
That all Thou givest is good.
Because I know there is no duty
Nobler than to believe in Beauty
And nurse a thankful mood.

HOME RE-VISITED.

OLD trusty trees, whose shade is o'er
The fields which first my footsteps knew,
Once more, and yet unchanged once more,
I reach my rest, and you !

I pluck the flowers I pluck'd of old ;
The cowslips claim their early friend ;
About my feet, yet fresh and cold,
The buttercups do bend ;

The selfsame buttercups they seem,
Thick in the bright-eyed green, and such
As when to me their blissful gleam
Was all earth's gold,—how much !

By every well-known dim recess
Of lawn or lane my paths at last,
In places fill'd with pleasantness,
Are peaceful as the past.

Old happy halls' o'er yonder hill,
 That roof the rippling woods, demure
 As good old age ye smile, how still !
 How still, and how secure !

Among your immemorial groves
 Whose rustling murmur round you blows,
 And by the ways the violet loves,
 Or where the pale primrose

Lights all the lanes with her wild eyes,
 I wander on, while memory leads,
 Lull'd by the sound of sultry flies
 That swarm the simmering meads.

Where Memory leads I wander on,
 Vague as the uncertain moth that sails
 Down floating scents where most the sun
 Is sweet in violet vales.

O violet vales, whose smile I view
 Through leafy-latticed glades serene,
 Your balmy breath doth half renew
 The soul of what hath been !

O blissful time, if time would stay
 Where time awhile admits repose !
 O happy fields ! and happiest they
 Whose world no further goes !

How sweet it were, eluding life,
 Here in the haunts where life began,
 To live the death of that dull strife
 That wastes the worth in man !

To grow familiar, hour by hour,
With nature, and that sweeter self,
Knowledge of which is more than power
Of place, and hoarded pelf !

How impudent, how false, appears
This beggar world, too poor to pay
(Though hankering after all our years)
The value of a day !

A day, at least, like this, of those
That rarely dawn 'twixt birth and death,
Peaceful as death's supreme repose,
And pure as new-born breath.

Like that spent giant, in the tale
The fabling Grecian Fancy told,
Who felt his Earthborn forces fail
(Sweet mythos, never old !)

When he no more might touch the ground
That gave him birth, so seems in me
The heart of youth this day hath found
Refresh'd and fed by thee,

Dear native soil ! dear land of home,
Thrice dearer for those distant days
In lands my feet have learn'd to roam
By lone and unloved ways !

How calm about the towers of heaven
Yon white cloud sleeps ! how lightly thro'
The glad green leaves the warm air driven
Lets in the breezy blue !

Men strive and strive for distant things :
Full many seek, and few attain :
Care grieves about the crowns of kings,
And purple soothes not pain.

But why should souls despair of bliss,
Or pine by hungry passions torn,
Who only would possess what is,
And be what they were born ?

THE SEPARATION OF SOULS.

I HAVE dream'd of a mountain out of sight,
And a fountain under the sea :
And this, if I interpret aright,
The meaning thereof must be.

Whenever the male monarch mountain
(Out-topping the tempest now,
In a mantle of mist,
With a girdle of snow,
And a corselet of amethyst)
May lie and be loved in the lap of the fountain
That doth under the hoary ocean flow
All in a wonderment whist,
—Where the sleepy sea-flowers blow
About on the brine, as they list,
With a tremulous to and fro,
And the silvery sea-snakes twist,

Untwist, and sail onward slow,
Like stars that the winds have kist,
In a rainy night, to a fitful light,
When the vapours sweep and throw
Soft shades where the moon is miss'd,—
Even then, and even so,
Spirit, dear Spirit of my deep dream,
Whose influence sweet in the soul of me
Is as one gleam of that mountain may seem
To that fountain flowing under the sea,—
Even then, even so, may we mingle, we two,
Mingle at last, and be one, as of yore
We were ere we were born, I know—
Mingle at last, and be one once more
As we were born to become, I and thou.
Ah, but it will not be now !

My dream is troubled. Men cry
Here and there, undiscerning.
The busy world goes by,
Each kind after his kind.
Thou seemest un-moved : but I !
I am waved as a flame in the burning
Floated vague on a viewless wind.
Days flit, they fly from under mine eye,
And the years roll on unreturning,
Leaving behind in the hollow mind
Only an infinite yearning.
From his lair in the cloud and snow
The mountain is not stirr'd
When the wild-hair'd winds do blow,
And the trumpet of thunder is heard :

But the fountain that floweth below
 Where the flocks of the ocean herd,
 It seeketh a rest which it findeth never ;
 With a tender trouble it trembleth ever ;
 For it feeleth an ancient shock
 (Or in still or in stormy weather)
 Of the Hand that upheaved the high dry rock
 In the heaping of floods together.
 I see thee, and sing to thee,
 Seek thee,—would cling to thee,
 Clasp thee, and kiss thee,—
 Yet mourn thee and miss thee,
 Borne on from thee, whither? ah, whither?
 Then all comes round again,
 Renewing the ancient pain.
 One moment of light on the main,
 And at intervals the violet walls
 Of the skyey hill hang plain
 On a mirror unmarr'd by a stain.
 Thy smile is on me,—'tis in vain !

The months they come and go ;
 They take the white May flower,
 The red October fruit ;
 They drop the dismal snow,
 They drive the ghostly shower
 That passes like a sorrow
 When all is chill and mute
 Along the empty night ;
 And in some sunless morrow
 Earth lies dead and white.
 We say . . . 'The end is come !

Will the wave flow again ?
The red rose blow again ?
Green grass will spring no more,
The intense lark sing no more,
The mountain's smile is o'er,
The fountain's lip is dumb.'
But the months, they go and come ;
They bring the white May flower,
The red October fruit ;
They drive the wan snow home ;
They chase the sobbing shower
Like a worn-out sorrow,
While young leaves do shoot,
Along the mellowing night,
And on some sunny morrow
Earth is laughing bright.
We say . . . ' No end can be !
The wave must flow once more,
The red rose blow once more ;
Green grass will spring again,
The intense lark sing again ;
The mountain laughs over the plain,
The fountain leaps under the sea.
Ah, the ever-recurring strain !
What art thou to me ?
Or what am I to thee ?
Since ever between us twain
Is the earth, and the sky and the sea.
Enough of passion, enough of pain !
Surely some end I should see,
Be it loss or gain . . . alas, in vain !

•
Ever there comes the self-same train.
What hath been still must be.
Tost from December to June,
Some rest the spirit craves !
Worms eating their own cocoon,
We toil out of our graves.
Morn melts, and, lightly strewn
With drops of brilliance, paves
The track of the triumphing noon :
Aproditè walks over the waves :
Whom to follow, the sea-folk soon
Float out of their foam-fed caves :
The mountains wax merry and boon :
Thick under the grape and blossom,
The maidens that dance to a milk-white moon
With young Bacchus and old Silenus,
Sing all together a wondrous tune,
Singing all at once, till the cymbals swoon,
And the ocean hums, whose heaving bosom
Is blue as the veins of Venus :
So all day long 'twixt the sky and the sea
The merry mad music is flowing,
As though out of ourselves to wean us.
But dreamest thou ever a dream of me ?
Ever, dear Spirit, a dream of me ?
For the world, it is coming, the world it is going,
But the world is ever between us.

Thou standest so far above :
I pine from so far beneath ;
Wide is the world, but narrow my range :

And the wide world's self, I know, must change,
—All is to pass through, all is to prove,
The patience of life, and the impulse of death,
Ere love be made perfect in love.
Then, what heights unexplored in thee !
What depths undivined in me !
What vague half-powers
In these souls of ours,
Combined and completed to be !
What knowledge to know !
What treasures to show !
What secrets seal'd in the sea !
What songs of deliverance, sung
By the stars of the morning, among
The dells of the golden snow,
When they dance and disport themselves, set free
Of the world's wide witness below !
Ah me, but to dream of it now !

I sigh for the sunrise :
I sigh for the sunseting :
When, all 'twixt seas and skies,
Rare ardours and lights devise
A rich life of their own begetting,
And Earth in a moment of wonder lies
Mild-hearted, free from fretting.
The hour of the dewy light !
The hour of the crimson close !
When the heart is hush'd, and the heaven is bright,
With expectation keen, or thronèd rich repose !
After the thunder-stain,
Sometimes a sudden gleam

Of glory on mountain and main !
 After spent storm and rain,
 Sometimes a solemn stream
 Of sound, a single strain
 (So sweet, can I deem it is only a dream?)
 Of Seraphim, on breaths of balm
 Breathed out of a heaven cleansed and calm ;—
 One note of the angels' psalm !
 One gust of the Paradise palm !
 It sounds so near, so plain,
 I see, I hear, so distinct,
 I seem so sure to attain
 Something ! the shining chain
 'Twixt soul and soul shows linkt
 By touches bland of an angel band
 With links of light succinct !
 We have only to stretch out the hand
 And make sure of the golden gain—
 —Only to will and command.
 No ! it is sunder'd again !

Yet 'tis much, whatever the chance,
 To have felt aware that such things are,
 Though reveal'd alone by a touch, a tone,
 And gone with a passing glance.
 Moments of recompense
 Are not wholly wanting :
 Gleams of intuition :
 Thrills of joy intense,
 That pacify long panting :
 Foretastes of fruition.
 For sometimes the wind drops :

Sometimes, all between
The motionless mountain-tops
There is not a cloud to be seen :
Sometimes the sea stops
His moaning submarine.
Then there falleth a pause :
Then the far stands near :
A silent sunlight draws
From the calmèd atmosphere
Veil after veil of a golden gauze :
And, suddenly shining clear,
The highest heights of the keen hills be,
And the deepest depths of the lucid sea,
And the nests that the eagles rear,
And the whelmèd isles where in glee
The starfish plants his spear,
And each leaf on the lonesome tree
In the wind-cleft mountain-pass,
And each tenderest tuft of grass
On the sky-claspt summits, appear
Seen close through a crystal glass.
Then down from the mountain-side
The mighty Image creeps
Over the trembling tide,
Over the dreaming deeps,
And in splendour still and wide
The glorious vision sleeps.

The mountain with the ocean
Mingles : the sea-fountain
With a gentle motion
Rocks the mirror'd mountain.

•
Both bask in a beam
Of beauty, and dream
Of a time, though but ill-remember'd,
When the sea and land 'neath the solemn Hand
Whose to-and-fro, in the ages ago,
The land from the sea dismember'd,
Lay as one living thing, aware of the wing
Of the spirit above them spread
In his purpose sublime; and again, of a time,
Though realized but rarely,
When, at the word of the Living Lord,
The mighty mountain shall humble his head
Avowing that God deals fairly,
And the sea shall render up her dead,
'That the perfect purpose of Time may be shown,
And the secret thoughts of all hearts known,
When the books are open'd and read
Before the Judge on the Great White Throne,
Whose sentence is yet unsaid.
Then those whom God hath mated
Man no more shall sever.
Then those by man parted,
Who long on earth have waited,
Shall be reinstated
Single soul'd, whole-hearted,
In marriage fair for ever.

Then may we mingle, we two,
Calm'd and clothèd brightly.
Then shall I know if my dream be true,
And if I interpret it rightly.

DUTY.

How like a trumpet from the sentinel
Angel, that standeth in the morning star
Empanoplied and plumed, as angels are
Whom God doth charge to watch that all be well,
Cometh to me thy call, O terrible,
That, girt, and crown'd and sworded for Heaven's war,
Standest supreme above the confused jar
Of shock'd antagonisms, and the yell
Of trampled Pain ! Thou of the solemn eyes,
Firm-fronted Duty, on whose high command
My heart waits awed, stretch forth thy harness'd hand,
And with a louder summons bid arise
My soul to battle. Hark, the muster-roll !
Thy name is call'd. Forth, thou poor conscript soul !

SACRIFICE.

UNTO my soul I said . . . ' Make now complete
Thy sacrifice by silence. Undeterr'd,
Strike down this beggar heart, that would be heard,
And stops men's pity in the public street ;
A mendicant for miserable meat !
Nor pay thy vassal, Pain, with any word,
Lest so the deed thou doest should be slurr'd
By shameful recompense, and all unsweet.

•
 Uncover not the faces of thy dead.
 Slay thy condemnèd self, and hide the knife.
 Even as kind Nature, not to grieve young life,
 Fond verdure o'er the recent graves doth spread,
 So hide beneath a smiling face the whole
 Of what God sees—thy sorrow, O my soul !

CONSOLATION.

WHEN I perceive how slight and poor appears
 (Though with sad care and strong compulsion brought
 Downrangèd rhymes with strenuous search of thought)
 The express'd result of my much-musèd years ;
 Remembering, too, from what divinest spheres
 Stoop'd many a starry visitant, and taught
 My spirit at her toils,—how round her wrought
 Strong Raptures, Sorrows, Splendours rich in tears,
 My whole heart fails me. Then an inward voice
 Replies, ' Possess thyself, and be content.
 Life's best is bound not by the utterance
 Of any word, nor may in sound be spent,
 To win back echoes out of hollow chance.
 What thou hast *felt* is thine. If much, rejoice.'

THE LAY OF THE COCK.

I.

Who will awaken the Lay of the Cock ?
 Who will praise his prowess and power ?
 Who will sing of his virtues seven ?

He that would waken Lay of the Cock,
Let him stand on a lofty tower,
All alone at the Dewy Hour,
And, elate in the light of the lifting heaven,
Smite his harp with a hand of power :
Let the harp be golden, the strings be seven,
And so let him waken the Lay of the Cock.

But who may fitly awaken that lay?
Who sing unshamed of the sacred Cock?
The bird of fire, the bird of Lok !
The friend and monitor of man ;
Best loved of all the feathery flock,
Since temples arose in Asia,
Or priests their holy rites began,
Roman, Greek, or Arabian !
Were I to say . . . ' I will waken the lay,'
Would not gods, and birds, and men,
Nod their heads at me and mock,
Mocking . . . ' This singer boasts too much'?
For he that would sing of the kingly Cock,
His lips should be as Memnon's, when
The Orient first with holy ray
That rose-marble mouth did touch,
And so to manful music wake.
Yet will I, for true love's sake,
(Tho' gods, and birds, and men may mock,)
From song essay what true love may,
As though I stood on a lofty tower
All alone at the Dewy Hour,
Elate in the light of the lifting heaven,
Boldly to praise his prowess and power,

Boldly to sing of his virtues seven,
And lightly awaken the Lay of the Cock.

II.

Now that Orion is going his rounds
And the dew is deep, and the lark asleep,
Ere the misty Morn hath burst her bounds,
Who is he doth lightly leap,
Leaping forth of the drowsy tent
O' the Night, with breastplate dew-besprent,
And orient plumes in the Orient?

He should be known by his armour bright :
He should be known by his stately tread :
Who standeth now aware on the wall,
Blowing abroad with might, with might,
As though he were come to summons the dead,
Once, twice, thrice, his clarion call.
He that steppeth in armour bright,
He that standeth aware on the wall,
As a watchman stands on a tower'd rock,
Blowing abroad with might, with might,
His clearly-echoing clarion call,
He is the scarlet-crested Cock :
He is the lord of the Dewy Hour :
Wakeful is he that watcheth for power :
He wotteth of change on earth, in heaven :
Watchful each, and watchful all,
And watchful aye, are the Virtues Seven :
And a watchful king is the crownèd Cock.

He waketh up in the solitude
Of the starry dawn : he walketh forth,

Moving in most majestic mood¹
 East and west, and south and north ;
 That, clear of eye, in a crystal sky
 He may number over the shining brood
 Of his seven-fold starry family,—
 The mystic Seven, the Seven and One !
 The brightest of all, his bride is she,
 Whose name in heaven is Alcyon :*
 To her he calleth three times three
 On brazen tromp with shrilly tone,
 Till, all for love, in the light of day
 She trembles, sinks, and swoons away :
 Swoons for love in the lucid heaven,
 And in skyey nest to ner starry flock
 Is folded faint at the Dewy Hour :
 She loveth her lord for his prowess and
 power,
 But she loveth him more for his true love given.
 Love is the first of the Virtues Seven,
 And a lover bold is the lordly Cock.

III.

A lover bold ! well used to wars :
 And therefore wise as well as bold :
 Strong to maintain, strong to defend !
 Which well they knew, those Flamens old,
 That in honour did hold for his corselet of gold,
 His stately step, and crest on end,
 The bird beloved by lusty Mars,
 And the well-skill'd Minerva's friend.

* The constellation of the Pleiades was named by the Arabian astronomers "The Hen and Chickens."

Therefore they praised his prowess and power,
His skill, his prudence; gifts by Heaven
To mortal men in such full dower
But rarely given, and only given
To the few fine heads that haply flower
To favour high from the common stock :
Yet these be but three among virtues seven
Of the loving, wise, and valiant Cock.

IV.

Experience clear, and courage high
Enkindle keen his kingly eye,
And all his acts bear dignity.
When he walketh under the vaulted arch
Where-through a mounted knight might march
At easy speed his pacing steed,
Nor bruise one plume of his helmet-crest,
This Cock, in the kingly-mindedness
Which all his royal gestes express,
Hath so lofty a heart in so lordly a breast
That, with stately stoop and swerving tread,
Lightly he boweth his lordly head.
So grand a consciousness hath he
Of his own inward majesty,
That breedeth a constant courtesy.

V.

Hark ! it awakens . . . the Lay of the Cock !
Up on a great sunbeam he springeth.
His clashing vans he doth unlock
Once, twice, thrice, and makes sweet shock
Of all his sheeny silken plumes,

And swiftly ampler pomp assumes,
And swiftly statelier stature gathers :
Then forth his brief bright flight he wingeth,
Alighting aloof on the burnisht roof,
And there, with voice sonorous, singeth
After the fashion of his forefathers
His ancient famous Lay of the Cock.

But first, as when in warlike Rome,
What time, devising swiftest plan
Wherewith to strongly subjugate
A rebel king Barbarian,
The conscript Senate sat sedate,
Uprising with importance, some
Renownèd Orator addrest
His theme to martial argument,
Who, pausing, took the posture best
Befitting utterance eloquent ;
So he, in oratoric mood,
With finger'd foot upheurl'd in air,
Assumes imposing attitude,
And pauses with deliberate care.
Then forth the grand oration, plain
Of purpose, pealing, fills and shakes
The startled air with sturdy strain,
Shrill as the triple clang that wakes
From the trump on the hill-top that tells where
the chain
Of brazen battle, tugged suddenly, breaks.
And as that rauque and strident cry,
That maketh of joy an agony,
To stronger purpose scaleth high,

Ever with inward ecstasy
The eyelid film falls languidly,
Half closing on the enraptured eye.

VI.

Then back to their lairs
Flit the pale nightmares,
And the phantoms that follow the night ;
The bats to their caves,
The ghosts to their graves ;
Demon and goblin sprite
To their prisons beneath ;
While the fleeting wreath
Of Sleep, its poppy balls
Folds, and flies,
Or on wakening eyes
In brilliant fragments falls ;
Hecate descends
To her own dark ends,
And after her grimly flock
All grisly things by Darkness given
To the sway of the Sunless Hour ;
But all that loveth the light of heaven,
Growing aware of his prowess and power,
And feeling the force of his virtues seven,
Doth rouse and rejoice
At the lusty voice
Of the loud world-welcomed Cock.

VII.

Anon, the noon is high upwheel'd
In heaven upon his ardent car :

The stillness holds a heavy hand
On all things : at their toil afar
The reapers droop in oaten field :
And the great trees, so stunn'd they are
With sunlight, by no breezes fann'd,
Sigh like sick giants through the land.
But he for whom my harp I string
(So might I half his glory share !)
In easy state, an orient king,
Frees all his royal heart from care ;
And through his throng'd seraglio moves
Amid his many queens full stately ;
And one he seeks, and one reproves,
But all he rules sedately.
Where thickest strewn, most brightly twinkles
The golden-grainèd barley
By haunts the thoughtful housewife sprinkles
That he may banquet early ;
About him all his bustling wives
He cheerly calls, and kingly
He bids them feed, nor churlish strives
Though all at once, or singly,
Clucking, to their good feast they come,
Aunts, sisters, daughters, cousins,
Some bashful, by themselves, and some
In noisy eager dozens,
All clamouring for their several share
Of his free largesse flung them,
While he, well-pleased and debonair,
Full stately steps among them.
Well-skill'd in government is he :
High-couraged, honourable,

And gentle-manner'd, as should be
Good kings whose thrones are stable :
Wise, loving, watchful as a star :
By lofty heart uplifted :
And, birds or men, on earth there are
Full few so nobly gifted.

VIII.

Bring me straightway a burnish'd shield,
Broad argent all, and semi-lucent
As moonlight is, through silver dew sent,
Such as of old, on roaring field,
The mighty king Idomeneus
Was wont in battle fierce to wield
'Mid gods and men of godlike thews.
By mighty spirits of heroes old
Let the mighty shield be fitly borne :
And roll me hither through gates of gold
Some bright, new-born, amazing Morn,
In rubeous dyes of ripe sunrise,
Fire-fringèd skirts, and purple plumes,
Whose mingling lustres laugh to scorn
All labour'd twine of Tyrian looms :
Rob me her clouds of their richest hues,
Steaming splendours, golden fumes,
And airy flames, that interfuse
With sanguine stain the gorgeous grain
That dazzles the eagle's dauntless eye
With its ardent lights aureorean ;—
Orient, amber, emerald, wan
Fleeting sapphire, and such red
Of throbbing depth as nothing can

With its intensest brilliance*vie,
Save where some slave hath newly shed,
To tinge Assyrian ivory,
Rare tinct of that renownèd dye
Bright with blood-drops arachnean.
Now dip me the pencil fervidly
In the working warmth of that rich sky
Ere yet the tingling tints be faint,
That I this kingly Cock may paint
In his full-plumèd majesty
And robes of state regalian,
Marching majestic in the van
Of day, with glittering eye.

And all the while, through gleaming dawn,
From distant lands, let some long-drawn
And earnest music fitly come .
Of chiding trump, and thund'rous drum,
Shrill-throated fife, lipp'd cymbals clear,
And flutes, that now and then may fawn
With flatteries fond, in Music's ear,
On martial purpose : while, by lawn
In sunlight sweet, or dewy dale,
The strenuous-marching sounds prevail,
Strong, sonorous, sweet, severe,
Thrilling the heart of the man who may hear,
Like the moving on of some mighty tale
Of chivalry, joust, and knightly cheer,
Tought with touches of fine sweet fear.

IX.

Trailing splendour, tossing sound
Of trumpet shrill, the region round ;

With blazing train like the cataract
 Of spouted flame from out his crackt
 Volcano-roof by Vulcan roll'd ;
 Breast-plate broad of beaten gold,
 Over amplest front smooth-spread ;
 Scarlet crest, thick-turreted
 As Cybele's, on stately head ;
 Orient cuishes, greaves of steel,
 Spleenful spur on knightly heel,
 Full stately strides the stalwart Cock.

A scornful soldan he : no giaour
 Of meaner plume from his wallèd bower,
 If prowling caught, shall pass forgiven.
 Oh, who his stately march may mock ?
 Who match with him in prowess and power ?
 Who emulate his virtues seven ?
 In all the land
 No peer may stand
 Crest-high before the unconquer'd Cock !

X.

He loveth well, for he hateth well :
 In all he doeth he doth excel :
 In all he hath he doth exult.
 He is ever busy : early abroad :
 Champion, bard, and sentinel :
 Strong, tender, true, and terrible ;
 He keepeth no good gift occult,
 But doth with gladness worship God.
 Glad to use his gracious gifts :
 Glad to feel his force and power :
 He loves the light : and, lofty, lifts

His honest head above the hour,
Looking on time as from a tower.
He cometh of an ancient stock,
To which the perfect flower
Of Chivalry was given.
Then nobly praise the noble Cock,
Proclaim his prowess and his power,
And sing his virtues seven.

XI.

Chaunted, and told
To a harp of gold,
Upon seven strings, should his virtues be,
That be sevenfold,
As, in time of old,
Were the Seven Spirits of Chivalry :
Noble Valour that feareth none :
Prudence, that placeth what Valour hath won :
Vigilance, keen-eyed, that keepeth from fall :
Justice, the joyous controller of all :
Temperance, sober, that girdeth the will,
For he guardeth the falchion of Valour : and Skill,
That is sovereign, and swayeth all forces with ease :
And Love, the life-giver, that leadeth all these.
Chaunted, and told
To a harp of gold,
Upon seven strings, being seven-fold,
Worthy to be are his virtues : and we,
If we were as bold,
As loving, as free
And liberal-soul'd,
As wise, as he,

•
As sober, vigilant, tender, and just,
And joyous, and scornful of mean mistrust,
Then the world would be
What the world to me
Doth seem when I hear,
In the sunshine clear,
This minstrel making magnanimous cheer,
And rejoicing in light with a heart of glee.
For his brave song teacheth
Timely content ;
And far as it reacheth,
My soul is sent,
Honouring God's good government,
And greeting the general joy of the world ;
While music without and mirth within,
Mingle my heart with the merry din
Of a loud and sweet defiance hurl'd
At darkness, and sorrow, and sin.

XII.

Wherefore, soon as his trumpet of triumph doth ring
In the roused air, praise we this noble king,
Not scorning due homage unto him to bring,
But feeling devoutly afraid
Lest the gifts of the Giver to all of us, meant
For high usage of worship and wonderment,
By each soul be not wisely and worthily spent
Upon aught that His wisdom hath made.
And so praise we the bird that praiseth with might
The day that dawneth to all,
And praise we him while the early light
From the low thatch doth fall

Aslant the moss-bound wall,
 And well-clad paling white
 With woodbine overgrown,
 Or roses freshly blown
 About the latticed farm,
 And every wallflower brown
 In homely gardens warm,
 Or neat sweet-smelling stock.
 For he deserveth praise,
 The herald of our days !
 And that to his high lays
 Homage we daily raise,
 Praising the praiseful Cock.

XIII.

Praise him for beauty, that doth stand
 In grace and grandeur, by the hand
 Of his high Maker dight :
 Praise him for gladness, and rejoice
 With him to lift on lusty voice
 Hosannas to the light :
 Praise him for worship, for he waits
 Upon the Lord, and in the gates
 Of Morning sings with power :
 Love thou the light ; put darkness by
 Betimes, and wait with watchful eye
 Occasion's dawning hour :
 Praise him for strength, and strongly use
 Thy days and hours : pay life full dues
 With an abundant heart :
 Thy mortal passions put forth well,
 To the utmost : be sincere : excel :

•
Make perfect every part :
Be unashamed, in all thou hast :
Hate : hold thy heel on Satan fast :
Fear : lest thou should'st offend :
Desire : make all things more and more,
Heap gain on gain, extend thy store :
Resist, unto the end,—
Lest thou be overthrown : be glad
Heartily : heartily be sad :
Serving the Lord both ways :
Love, that thou may'st the most attain :
Be jealous, lest thou lose a grain :
All passions are for praise.
O thou, the vigilant and strong !
O minstrel of the morning song !
O singer in the sun !
Thou that dost first proclaim abroad
The gladness and the glory of God
To thy clear clarion !
This lesson from thy life I learn :
This lesson in thy song discern :
Therefore I love thee well :
Therefore with thine I fain would mate
My hymn of praise, and emulate
Thy high-toned oracle.

THE STARLING.

SPRING's pilot; and her nimblest-wingèd darling,
Despite the arrowy-flighted Swallow
That in thy wake doth follow
To rob thee of renown, belovèd Starling !
Is it thy voice I hear,
Loud all along the drear
Misfeatured fens and fallows far away,
Cleaving the cloudy air ?
And nearer and more near,
Till now thy note is there
In the yet unblossom'd orchard, sprinkled through
the scanty spray;
Once more, among the dews
In green England, shedding news
Of sunrise on the slopes of snowy Himalay !
Full weary of old Winter, sick of sorrow,
As I lay a-drowsing in the dark at dawn of day,
Seeking to shut from sight a sunless morrow,
And sueing to assist me fitting Sleep that would not
stay,
Out of dim lands remote
Came a hoarse but happy note ;
And then a scatter'd rustling, loud beyond the lattice
eaves,
Of jostled wings, a-riot in the rare and rainy leaves.
Surely, surely, saucy angel
Of young Spring's shrill-voiced evangel,

•
Surely that was thou and thine,
Singing songs yet somewhat hoarser for the sea-wind
and the brine
Lately left, and early come
Here, where cold April grieves,
Upon the few wet leaves,
To build, in low-loop'd apple-boughs a dewy-latticed
home.
Yet can I not divine
By any sight or sign,
Blithe bird, whose brimming note the unsteady wind
spills o'er the lea,
For what reason thou hast sought
A land so void of aught
That may minister delight unto the merry heart in
thee !
Is it because thou hast
Such a kindness for the past
That from remember'd places thou canst never set
thee free ?
Or rather that, with some
Strong souls, in things to come
Such faith is thine that Spring, ere she approaches,
thou canst see ?
I, at least, thy loud *resurgams* having heard, for love
of thee
And thy noisy family,
(Albeit thy voice, and theirs, be harsh and rude !)
All the morn long have been roaming the wet field
and wintry wood,
The burthen of an old song humming,—
'The Starlings are come ! and merry May,

And June, and the white-thorn, and the hay,
And the violet, and then the rose, and all good things,
are coming !

Little, little do men love thee
Who judge by outward seeming ;
And why should I approve thee,
Audacious bird, for screaming ?
Poets should be pleasant-tongued, and lovely in their
lays :
Not as thine must be the songs our laurel-leaf repays !
All thy ways are coarse ;
All thy notes are hoarse ;
Much noise, and little melody, thou makest, the world
says.

'Tis the truth of what thou singest,
Singing ere the woods be green,
The glad tidings which thou bringest,
And the poet-insight keen
Into all sweet things unseen,
'Tis the meaning, not the manner, of thy song which
I must praise.

But ah, herald ! Spring delays
To justify thy mission : stark, unstirr'd,
The blue woods watch thee : earth in dull amaze,
Coldly thy note hath heard ;
And still she looks perplexed, still listens half-offended,
Not trusting in thy word.
Thou comest before thy time, and unattended !
Thy boldest prophecies
Are mockt by cloudy skies :

Thy sweetest songs are all uncomprehended.
Yet still, of better days
Thou singest undeterr'd;
Still chantest thy lone lays
In merry scorn of praise,
Befriending thus a land that leaves thee unbefriended.

Wherefore, dear bird, thrice hail !
And may thy voice prevail,
Till all the world to thy glad creed be won !
Envy not thou Ceyx, or Halcyon,
Their swooning seas, faint-lighted lands of fable,
And foamless isles, the tempest strikes not on,
That sleep in harbours green and hospitable;
For thou within thyself, despite foul weather,
Hast golden calms and glories,
Like windless lights where wizards meet together
On stormy promontories.
With songs that shall avail
Through sound of sunlit hail,
Sing out thy happy news, and, yet again
Disdaining earth's disdain,
Unlock the shut leaves, one by one, to listen to thy
tale !
O leave to the luxurious Nightingale
Her moon-loved revels and her lush delights
In dewy leaves by many a dappled dale,
Or pleasant lawn, star-sweet on summer nights !
Thine is the Bardic chant, the battle strain,
The strenuous impulse thine,
Antagonizing wind, and sleety rain,
In the tough-headed pine.

Leave to the Lark his golden chariotings,
And songs Memnonian in the shrill sunrise,
And lordom lone o'er Dawn's delightful things !
Thy kingdom, with the coming season, lies
Safe in some shelter'd vale of sleepy Time,
Where yet-moss-bound primroses,
And many a young first-love, and musèd rhyme,
Thy clear-voiced call uncloses.
Care not, therefore, for cold pattering
Of the hard white hail,
Nor what engines rancorous March may bring,
At the florid porches battering
Of that visionary vale,
Whence, tho' skies be woeful-pale,
Thou with faith that cannot fail,
Earth's forlorn heart fondly flattering,
Joyfully dost shout and sing.
Wince not, Bird, from Winter, scattering
His spent snows against thy wing :
Careless of the churlish chattering
Of a half-discrownèd king,
Let the wild winds wail !
Thy sweet summonsing
Goeth on the gale,
Warden of the Spring,
To the hearts of hidden flowers,
That shall people the pale bowers
Greener growing from grey showers.

Vex not thy stout heart, nor chafe
At the light and timid Swallow,
Proffering his friendship shallow
When his friend is safe.

A careless second comer,
He comes of common kind :
Secure of the world's summer,
And very sure to find—
What thou hast never known—
The fame that lags behind
The first who flies alone.

False and fickle, he !
 (Truth is bitter!)
False and fickle, he
That takes the fame 'twere fitter
True hearts should render thee !
A bird that loves the glitter,
A thing of twitter, twitter,
 Where many listeners be :
A fickle bird, I trow,
 And a fickle friend to me !
 But what is that to thee ?
Full little reckest thou
Of the rain in russet lands, or the wind around thee
 snarling,
The Spring thou singest of is in thy heart, brave
 Starling !

Therefore, to thee is given
 An insight wildly-wise,
Into the purposes of heaven,
 The secrets of the skies.
Thy friends are yet unborn :
 The earliest violet,
The first bud on the thorn,

And the young roses, wet
With tears of the first morn
That doth rosebuds beget.
Thy foes are yet a-dying :
Ragged-skirted rains,
Winds, at random flying
Fast with cloudy manes,
And the last snows, lying
Lost on chilly plains.
Grief and Joy together,
Colloquize with thee ;
Sad and sunny weather
Shift around the tree
Where, not heeding either,
Thou art pouring free,
Such live song as neither
(Harshest tho' it be)
Critics' scorn can wither,
Nor their praises fee.
A music over-winged,
On laughter-lifted pinions,
Earth's bleakness and despair,
Like old Amphion's singing
To raise serene dominions,
And fashion from void air,
Moved by the nimbly-sounding minions
Of its majestic mandate everywhere,
Those blossomy battlements,
And green ascents,
Where, in due time, shall dwell
All the delicious sights, and sounds, and scents
Of Spring's gay citadel.

NARRATIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE.

VOL. I.

GOOD-NIGHT IN THE PORCH.

I.

A LITTLE longer in the light, love, let me be, The
air is warm.

I hear the cuckoo's last good-night float from the
copse below the Farm.

A little longer, Sister sweet—your hand in mine—
on this old seat!

II.

In yon red gable, which the rose creeps round and
o'er, your casement shines

Against the yellow west, o'er those forlorn and soli-
tary pines.

The long, loud day is nearly done. How silent all
the place is grown !

III.

From the warm upland comes a gust made fragrant
with the brown hay there.

The meek cows, with their white horns thrust across
the hedge, stand still and stare.

The steaming horses from the wains droop o'er the
tank their plaited manes.

IV.

And o'er yon hill-side brown and barren (where you
and I as children play'd,
Starting the rabbit to his warren), I hear the sandy,
shrill cascade
Leap down upon the vale, and spill cool sound and
light i' the lonesome Mill.

V.

O can it be for nothing only that God hath shown
His world to me?
Or but to leave the heart more lonely for loss of
beauty? Can it be?
O closer, closer, Sister dear. . . . nay, I have kist
away that tear.

VI.

God bless you, for the tender thought which only
upon tears could rise!
God bless you for the love that sought to hide them
in those drooping eyes,
Whose lids I kiss! . . . poor lids, so red! but let my
kiss fall there instead.

VII.

Yes! sad, indeed, it seems each night,—and sadder,
Sister, for your sake,—
To watch the last low lingering light, and know not
where the morn may break.
To-night we sit together here. To-morrow night will
come ah, where?

VIII.

O child ! howe'er assured be faith, to say farewell is
fraught with gloom,
When, like one flower, the germs of death and genius
ripen toward the tomb ;
And earth each day, as some fond face at parting,
wears a graver grace.

IX.

There's not a flower, there's not a tree, in this old
garden where we sit,
But what some fragrant memory is closed and folded
up in it.
To-night the dog-rose smells as wild, as fresh, as
when I was a child.

X.

'Tis eight years since (do you forget ?) we set those
lilies near the wall :
You were a blue-eyed child : even yet I seem to see
the ringlets fall—
The golden ringlets, blown behind your shoulders in
the merry wind !

XI.

Ah me ! old times,—the sweet, the sting ! And oft,
by yonder green old gate
The field shows through, in morns of Spring, an
eager boy, I paused elate
With all sweet fancies loosed from school. And oft,
you know, when eves were cool

XII.

In August, bold as two young rooks perch'd in a
belfry by themselves,
We, chatting of our favourite books, light-hearted
over-weening elves,
Dealt praise or blame to poets gone, here in the
woodbine-porch alone.

XIII.

Ah, there's my epic—I began when life seem'd long,
though longer art,—
And all the glorious deeds of man made golden riot
in my heart—
Eight books . . . it will not number nine! I die
before my heroine.

XIV.

Sister! they say that drowning men in one wild
moment can recall
Their whole life long, and feel again the pain—the
bliss—that throng'd it all.
Last night those phantoms of the Past again came
crowding round me fast.

XV.

Near morning, when the lamp was low, against the
wall they seem'd to flit ;
And, as the wavering light would glow or fall, they
came and went with it.
The ghost of boyhood seem'd to gaze down the dark
verge of vanisht days.

XVI.

Once more the garden, where she walk'd on summer
eves to tend her flowers,
Once more the lawn, where first we talk'd of future
years in twilight hours,
Arose ; once more she seem'd to pass before me, in
the waving grass,

XVII.

To that old terrace ; her bright hair about her warm
neck all undone,
And waving on the balmy air, with tinges of the
dying sun ;
Just one bright star in the broad west ; just one bird
singing near its nest.

XVIII.

So lovely, so beloved ! Oh fair as though that sun
had never set
Which staid upon her golden hair, in dreams I seem
to see her yet !
To see her in that old green place—the same husht
smiling cruel face !

XIX.

A little older, love, than you are now ; and I was then
a boy ;
And wild and wayward-hearted too ; to her my passion
was a toy,
Soon broken ! ah, a foolish thing—a butterfly with
crumpled wing !

XX.

Her hair, too, was like yours—as bright, but with a
warmer golden tinge ;
Her eyes, a somewhat deeper light, and dream'd be-
neath a longer fringe :
And still that strange grave smile she had stays in my
soul and keeps it sad !

XXI.

From little things—a star, a flower—that touch'd us
with the self-same thought,
My passion deepen'd hour by hour, until to that fierce
heat 'twas wrought,
Which, shrivelling over every nerve, crumbled the
outworks of reserve.

XXII.

I told her then, in that wild time, the love I knew
she long had seen ;
The accusing pain that burn'd like crime, yet left me
nobler than I had been ;
What matter with what words I woo'd her ? She
said I had misunderstood her.

XXIII.

Misunderstood ! misunderstood ! Ay, not her
only, but thereby
All that souls say in flesh and blood ! misunder-
standing till I die
The meaning of that face, the while my heart lay
aching in its smile.

XXIV.

Misunderstood? misunderstood? ay, life, love, all
things, when, alone,
I heard the crashing of my blood on the brute silence!
She was gone.
The stinging sunlight stabb'd me through the leaves.
Above, the blind, bright blue

XXV.

Laugh'd, with no meaning, in my face. And nothing
could I realize
Save a dull strangeness,—the disgrace of a stunn'd
impotent surprise.
The great noon gaped : blithe birds were shrill. The
world went on ; my heart stood still.

XXVI.

My heart stands still, the world goes on, the years
go by, and now a mild
Unmurmuring mind hath sorrow won from memory.
I have seen her child,—
The self-same eyes her mother had,—that once had
power to make me mad !

XXVII.

Dark violet eyes whose glances, deep with April-
hints of sunny tears,
'Neath long soft lashes laid asleep, seem'd all too
thoughtful for her years !
As though from mine her gaze had caught the secret
of some mournful thought.

XXVIII.

But when she spake, her father's air broke o'er her . . .
that clear confident voice !
Some happy souls there are that wear their nature
lightly ; these rejoice
The world by living, and receive from all men more
than what they give.

XXIX.

One handful of their buoyant chaff exceeds our hoards
of careful grain :
Because their love breaks through their laugh, while
ours is fraught with tender pain :
The world, that knows itself too sad, is proud to keep
some faces glad :

XXX.

And, so it is ! from such an one Misfortune softly
steps aside,
To let him still walk in the sun. These things must
be. I cannot chide.
Had I been she, I might have made the self-same
choice. She shunn'd the shade.

XXXI.

To some men God hath given laughter : but tears to
some men He hath given.
He bade us sow in tears, hereafter to harvest holier
smiles in Heaven ;
And tears and smiles, they are His gift : both good,
to smite or to uplift.

XXXII.

He knows His sheep : and some His showers shall
whiten, some His suns shall warm.
Our pains are portion'd to our powers. His hand
may hurt, but cannot harm.
He tempers smiles with tears, both good to bear in
time the Christian mood.

XXXIII.

O yet—in scorn of mean relief, let Sorrow bear her
heavenly fruit !
Better the wildest hour of grief than the low pastime
of the brute !
Better to weep, for He wept too, than laugh as every
fool can do.

XXXIV.

For, sure, 'twere best to bear the cross ; nor lightly
fling the thorns behind,
Lest we grow happy by the loss of what was noblest
in the mind. !
Here—in the ruins of my years—Father, I bless
Thee, through these tears !

XXXV.

It was in the far foreign lands this sickness came
upon me first.
By hot winds scorching desert sands this fever of the
south was nurst,
Until it reach'd some vital part. I die not of a broken
heart.

XXXVI.

O think not that! If I could live . . . there's much
to live for, worthy life.
It is not for what fame could give—though that I
scorn not—but the strife
Were noble for its own sake too. I thought that I
had much to do—

XXXVII.

But God begins, child, where men end . . . Hark !
'twas the bittern, as he rose
Against the glaring river-bend. How red your little
casement glows !
The night falls fast. How lonely, Dear, this bleak
old house will look next year !

XXXVIII.

So sad a thought? . . . ah, yes ! I know it is not
well to brood on this :
And yet—such thoughts will come and go, unbidden.
'Tis that you should miss,
My darling, one familiar tone of this weak voice when
I am gone.

XXXIX.

And for what's past—I will not say in what she did
that all was right,
But all's forgiven ; and I pray for her life's welfare
day and night.
All things are changed ! This cheek would glow even
near hers but faintly now !

XL.

Thou God ! before whose sleepless eye not even in
vain the sparrows fall,
Receive, sustain me ! sanctify my soul. Thou know'st
Thou lovest all.
Too weak to walk alone—I see Thy hand : I falter
back to Thee.

XLI.

Saved from the curse of time which throws its base-
ness on us day by day :
Its wretched joys and worthless woes ; till all the
heart is worn away.
I feel Thee near. I hold my breath by the half-open
doors of Death.

XLII.

And, sometimes, glimpses from within of glory (won-
drous sight and sound !)
Float near me :—faces pure from sin : strange music :
saints with splendour crown'd :
I seem to feel my native air blow down from some high
region there,

XLIII.

And fan my spirit pure : I rise above the sense of
loss and pain :
Faint forms that lured my childhood's eyes, long lost,
I seem to find again :
I see the end of all : I feel hope, awe, no language
can reveal.

XLIV.

Forgive me, Lord, if overmuch I loved that form Thou
mad'st so fair:

I know that Thou didst make her such; and fair but
as the flowers were—

Thy work: her beauty was but Thine: the human
less than the divine.

XLV.

My life hath been one search for Thee 'mid thorns
found red with Thy dear blood:

In many a dark Gethsemanë I seem'd to stand where
Thou hadst stood:

And, scorn'd in this world's judgment-place, at times,
through tears, to catch Thy face.

XLVI.

Thou suffered'st here, and didst not fail: Thy bleed-
ing feet these paths have trod:

But Thou wert strong, and I am frail: and I am
man, and Thou wert God.

Be near me: keep me in Thy sight: or lay my soul
asleep in light.

XLVII.

O to be where the meanest mind is more than Shake-
speare! where one look

Shows more than here the wise can find though toil-
ing slow from book to book!

Where life is knowledge: love is sure: and hope's
brief promise made secure.

XLVIII.

O dying voice of human praise ! the crude ambitions
of my youth !
I long to pour immortal lays ! great pæans of peren-
nial truth !
A larger work ! a loftier aim ! . . . and what are laurel
leaves and fame ?

XLIX.

And what are words ? How little these the silence of
the soul express !
Mere froth—the foam and flower of seas whose
hungering waters heave and press
Against the planets and the sides of night—mute,
yearning mystic tides !

L.

To ease the heart with song is sweet : sweet to be
heard if heard by love.
And you have heard me. When we meet shall we
not sing the old songs above
To grander music ? Sweet one, kiss. O blest it is to
die like this !

LI.

To lapse from being without pain : your hand in
mine, on mine your heart,
The unshaken faith to meet again that sheathes the
pang with which we part :
My head upon your bosom, Sweet : your hand in
mine on this old seat !

KING SOLOMON AND THE MOUSE.

(Rabbinical.)

I.

KING Solomon stood, in his crown of gold,
Between the pillars before the altar,
In the house of the Lord. And the King was old,
And his strength began to falter,
So that he lean'd on his ebony staff,
Seal'd with the seal of the Pentegraph.

II.

All of the golden fretted work,
Without and within so rich and rare,
As high as the nest of the building stork,
Those pillars of cedar were :—
Wrought up to the brazen chapiters
Of the Sidonian artificers.

III.

And the King stood still as a carven king,
The carven cedarn beams below,
In his purple robe, with his signet ring,
And his beard as white as snow,
And his face to the Oracle, where the hymn
Dies under the wings of the Cherubim.

IV.

The wings fold over the Oracle,
And cover the heart and eyes of God :

The Spouse with^o pomegranate, lily, and bell,
Is glorious in her abode ;
For with gold of Ophir, and scent of myrrh,
And purple of Tyre, the King clothed her.

V.

By the soul of each slumbrous instrument
Drawn soft through the musical misty air,
The stream of the folk that came and went,
For worship and praise and prayer,
Flow'd to and fro, and up and down,
And round the King in his golden crown.

VI.

And it came to pass, as the King stood there,
And look'd on the house he had built, with pride,
That the Hand of the Lord came unaware,
And touch'd him ; so that he died,
In his purple robe, with his signet ring,
And the crown wherewith they had crown'd him king.

VII.

And the stream of the folk that came and went
To worship the Lord with prayer and praise,
Went softly ever, in wonderment,
For the King stood there always ;
And it was solemn and strange to behold
That dead king crown'd with a crown of gold.

VIII.

For he lean'd on his ebony staff upright !
And over his shoulders the purple robe ;

And his hair, and his beard, were both snow-white ;
And the fear of him fill'd the globe ;
So that none dared touch him, though he was dead,
He look'd so royal about the head.

IX.

And the moons were changed : and the years roll'd on :
And the new king reign'd in the old king's stead :
And men were married and buried anon :
But the King stood, stark and dead ;
Leaning upright on his ebony staff ;
Preserved by the sign of the Pentagraph.

X.

And the stream of life, as it went and came,
Ever for worship and praise and prayer,
Was awed by the face, and the fear, and the fame
Of the Dead King standing there ;
For his hair was so white, and his eyes so cold,
That they left him alone with his crown of gold,

XI.

Magnificent, dead, and dread, in the House
Of the Lord, held there by the Pentagraph !
Until out from a pillar there ran a red mouse,
And gnaw'd through his ebony staff !
Then, flat on his face, the King fell down :
And they pick'd from the dust a golden crown.

THE DEATH OF KING HACON.

I.

It was Odin that whisper'd in Vingolf,
"Go forth to the heath by the sea ;
Find Hacon before the moon rises,
And bid him to supper with me."

II.

They go forth to choose from the Princes
Of Yngvon, and summons from fight
A man who must perish in battle,
And sup where the gods sup to-night.

III.

Leaning over her brazen spear, Gondula
Thus bespake her companions, "The feast
Of the gods shall, in Vingolf, this evening,
O ye Daughters of War, be encreast.

IV.

"For Odin hath beckon'd unto me,
For Odin hath whisper'd me forth,
To bid to his supper King Hacon
With the half of the hosts of the North."

V.

Their horses gleam'd white through the vapour :
In the moonlight their corselets did shine :
As they waver'd and whisper'd together,
And fashion'd their solemn design.

VI.

Hacon heard them discoursing—"Why hast thou
Thus disposed of the battle so soon?
Oh were we not worthy of conquest?
Lo! we die by the rise of the moon."

VII.

"It is not the moon that is rising,
But the glory which penetrates death,
When heroes to Odin are summon'd :
Rise, Hacon, and stand on the heath !

VIII.

"It is we," she replied, "that have given
To thy pasture the flower of the fight,
It is we, it is we, that have scatter'd
Thine enemies yonder in flight.

"Come now, let us push on our horses
Over yonder green worlds in the east,
Where the great gods are gather'd together,
And the tables are piled for the feast.

X.

"Betimes to give notice to Odin,
Who waits in his sovran abodes,
That the King to his palace is coming
This evening to visit the gods."

XI.

Odin rose when he heard it, and with him
Rose the gods, every god to his feet.
He beckon'd Hermoder and Brago,
They came to him, each from his seat.

XII.

“Go forth, O my sons, to King Hacon,
And meet him and greet him from all,
A King that we know by his valour
Is coming to-night to our hall.”

XIII.

Then faintly King Hacon approaches,
Arriving from battle, and sore
With the wounds that yet bleed through his armour,
Bedabbled and dripping with gore.

XIV.

His visage is pallid and awful
With the awe and pallor of death,
Like the moon that at midnight arises
Where the battle lies strewn on the heath.

XV.

To him spake Hermoder and Brago,
“We meet thee and greet thee from all,
To the gods thou art known by thy valour,
And they bid thee a guest to their hall.

XVI.

“Come hither, come hither, King Hacon,
And join those eight brothers of thine,
Who already, awaiting thy coming,
With the gods in Walhala recline.

XVII.

“And loosen, O Hacon, thy corslet,
For thy wounds are yet ghastly to see.
Go, pour ale in the circle of heroes,
And drink, for the gods drink to thee!”

XVIII.

But he answer'd, the hero, “I never
Will part with the armour I wear.
Shall a warrior stand before Odin
Unshamed, without helmet and spear?”

XIX.

Black Fenris, the wolf, the destroyer,
Shall arise and break loose from his chain,
Before that a hero like Hacon
Shall stand in the battle again.

QUEEN GUENEVERE.

THENCE, up the sea-green floor, among the stems
Of mighty columns whose unmeasured shades
From aisle to aisle, unheeded in the sun,
Moved without sound, I, following all alone

A strange desire that drew me like a hand,
Came unawares upon the Queen.

She sat

In a great silence, which her beauty fill'd
Full to the heart of it, on a black chair
Mail'd all about with sullen gems, and crusts
Of sultry blazonry. Her face was bow'd,
A pause of slumbrous beauty, o'er the light
Of some delicious thought new-risen above
The deeps of passion. Round her stately head
A single circlet of the red gold fine
Burn'd free, from which, on either side stream'd down
Twilights of her soft hair, from neck to foot.
Green was her kirtle as the emerolde is,
And stiff from hem to hem with seams of stones
Beyond all value ; which, from left to right
Disparting, half reveal'd the snowy gleam
Of a white robe of spotless samyte pure.
And from the soft repression of her zone,
Which, like a light hand on a lutestring, press'd
Harmony from its touch, flow'd warmly back
The beauteous outlines of a glowing grace,
Nor yet outflow'd sweet laws of loveliness.

Then did I feel as one who, much perplext,
Led by strange legends and the light of stars
Over long regions of the midnight sand
Beyond the red tract of the Pyramids,
Is suddenly drawn to look upon the sky
From sense of unfamiliar light, and sees,
Reveal'd against the constellated cope,
The Great Cross of the South.

The chamber round
Was dropt with arras green ; and I could hear,
In courts far off, a minstrel praising May,
Who sang . . . *Si douce, si douce est la Margarete!*
To a faint lute. Upon the window-sill,
Hard by a latoun bowl that blazed i' the sun,
Perch'd a strange fowl, a Falcon Perigrine ;
With all his feathers puft for pride, and all
His courage glittering outward in his eye ;
For he had flown from far, athwart strange lands,
And o'er the light of many a setting sun,
Lured by his love (such sovereignty of old
Had Beauty in all courts of Christendom !)
To look into the great eyes of the Queen.

KING HERMANDIAZ.

THEN, standing by the shore, I saw the moon
Change hue, and dwindle in the west, as when
Warm looks fade inward out of dying eyes,
And the dim sea began to moan.

I knew
My hour had come, and to the bark I went.
Still were the stately decks, and hung with silk
Of stolèd crimson : at the masthead burn'd
A steadfast fire with influence like a star ;
And underneath a couch of gold. I loosed
The dripping chain. There was not any wind :
But all at once the magic sails began
To belly and heave, and, like a bat that wakes

And flits by night, beneath her swarthy wings
The black ship rock'd, and moved. I heard anon
A humming in the cordage, and a sound
Like bees in summer, and the bark went on,
And on, and on, until at last the world
Was roll'd away and folded out of sight,
And I was all alone on the great sea.

There a deep awe fell on my spirit. My wound
Began to bite. I, gazing round, beheld
A Lady sitting silent at the helm,
A woman white as death, and fair as dreams.
I would have asked her "Whither do we sail?"
And "how?" but that my fear clung at my heart,
And held me still. She, answering my doubt,
Said slowly, "To the Isle of Avalon."

And straightway we were nigh a strand all gold,
That glitter'd in the moon between the dusk
Of hanging bowers, broad, lustrous, somnolent,
Where dropp'd the trailing rose from belt to belt
Of sea-bank myrtle spray, and, all about
The labyrinthine hollows underneath,
The red and purple dragon-mouths were bright
And thick, with knots of twinkling asphodel,
That strew'd a summer darkness of deep grass
Delicious, and a multitude of flowers
Marvellous, most sweet-savour'd, all unlike
The flowers that live about in other lands;
Wherefrom faint gusts came to me; and I heard
A sound of lutes among the vales, and songs
Of voices faint like voices through a dream,
That said, or seem'd to say, "Hail, Hermandiaz!"

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE JOUSTS.

THE summer night was starry, sweet, and still :
The oak-leaf moved not on the moonlit hill :
Warm, in the broad lake bathed the milkwhite stars
Without a shudder : lights from lattice bars
Died, one by one, to darkness : still he stood
Without, and watch'd them in a happy mood,
And sang . . .

All night the moonbeams bathe the sward.
There's not an eye to-night in Joyous-Gard
That is not dreaming something sweet. I wake
Because it is more sweet to dream awake :
Dreaming I see thy face upon the lake.

I am come up from far, love, to behold thee,
That hast waited for me so bravely and well
Thy sweet life long (for the Fairies had told thee
I am the Knight that shall loosen the spell),
And to-morrow morn my arms shall enfold thee :
And to-morrow night ah, who can tell ?

As the spirit of some dark lake
Pines at nightfall, wild-awake,
For the approaching consummation
Of a great moon he divines
Coming to her coronation
Of the dazzling stars and signs,

•
So my heart, my heart,
Darkly (ah, and tremblingly !)
Waits in mystic expectation,
From its wild source far apart,
Until it be fill'd with thee—
With the full-orb'd light of thee—
O belovèd, as thou art !
With the soft sad smile that flashes
Underneath thy long dark lashes ;
And thy floating raven hair,
From its wreathèd pearls let slip ;
And thy breath, like balmy air ;
And thy warm wet rosy lip,
With my first kiss lingering there ;
Its sweet secret unreveal'd—
Seal'd by me, to me unseal'd ;
And . . . but, ah ! she lies asleep
In yon gray stone castle-keep,
On her lids the happy tear ;
And alone I linger here ;
And to-morrow morn the fight ;
And . . . ah, me ! to-morrow night ?

THE EARL'S RETURN.

I.

RAGGED and tall stood the castle wall.
And the squires, at their sport, in the great South
Court,

Lounged all day long from stable to hall
Laughingly, lazily, one and all.
The land about was barren and blue,
And swept by the wing of the wet sea-mew.
Seven fishermen's huts on a shelly shore :
Sand-heaps behind, and sand-banks before :
And a black champagne streaked white all through
To a great salt pool which the ocean drew,
Suck'd into itself, and disgorged it again
To stagnate and steam on the mineral plain :
Not a tree nor a bush in the circle of sight,
But a bare black thorn which the sea-winds had
wither'd
With the drifting scum of the surf and blight,
And some patches of gray grass-land to the right,
Where the lean red-hided cattle were tether'd :
A reef of rock wedged the water in twain,
And a stout stone tower stood square to the main.

II.

And the flakes of the spray that were jerk'd away
From the froth on the lip of the bleak blue sea
Were sometimes flung by the wind, as it swung
Over turret and terrace and balcony,
To the garden below where, in desolate corners
Under the mossy green parapet there,
The lilies crouch'd, rocking their white heads like
mourners,
And burn'd off the heads of the flowers, that were
Pining and pale in their comfortless bowers,
Dry-bush'd with the sharp stubborn lavender,
And paven with disks of the torn sun-flowers,

Which, day by day, were strangled, and stripp'd
Of their ravell'd fringes and brazen bosses,
And the hardy mary-buds nipp'd and ripp'd
Into shreds for the beetles that lurk'd in the mosses.

III.

Here she lived alone, and from year to year
She saw the bleak belt of the ocean appear
At her casement each morn as she rose ; and each morn
Her eye fell first on the bare black thorn.
This was all : nothing more : or sometimes on the shore
The fisherman sang when the fishing was o'er ;
Or the lowing of oxen fell dreamily,
Close on the shut of the glimmering eves,
Through some gusty pause in the moaning sea,
When the pools were splash'd pink by the thirsty
beeves.

Or sometimes, when the pearl-lighted morns drew the
tinges

Of the cold sunrise up their amber fringes,
A white sail peer'd over the rim of the main,
Look'd all about o'er the empty sea,
Stagger'd back from the fine line of white light again,
And dropp'd down to another world silently.
Then she breath'd freer. With sickening dread
She had watch'd five pale young moons unfold
From their notchy cavern in light, and spread
To the fuller light, and again grow old,
And dwindle away to a luminous shred.
“ He will not come back till the Spring's green and
gold.

And I would that I with the leaves were dead,

Quiet somewhere, with them, in the moss and the
mould,
When he and the Summer come this way," she said.

IV.

And when the dull sky darken'd down to the edges,
And the keen frost kindled in star and spar,
The sea might be known by a noise on the ledges
Of the long crags, gathering power from afar
Through his roaring bays, and crawling back
Hissing, as o'er the wet pebbles he dragg'd
His skirt of foam fray'd, dripping, and jagg'd,
And reluctantly fell down the smooth hollow shell
Of the night, whose lustrous surface of black
In spots to an intense blue was worn.
But later, when up on the sullen sea-bar
The wide large-lighted moon had arisen,
Where the dark and voluminous ocean grew luminous,
Helping after her slowly one little shy star
That shook blue in the cold, and look'd forlorn,
The thin clouds 'gan roll, and the wind far off
Behind them leap'd down with a light laugh of scorn,
At the land's drear leanness to snarl and scoff.
Then the last thing she saw was that bare black thorn :
For, by as he went, the bleak blast took it,
Howl'd through it, and beat it, and bit it, and shook it ;
And such weakness and wickedness mix'd together
Never were seen as in that crouch'd, lean,
And shuddering tree, like a dwarfish elf,
Caught hiding his heap of stolen pelf,
And choked in the grasp of the giant weather.

NARRATIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE.

V.

And the snow was lifted into the air
Layer by layer,
And turn'd into vast white clouds that flew
Silent and fleet up the sky, and were riven
And jerk'd into chasms which the sun leap'd through,
Opening crystal gulfs of a breezy blue
Fed with rainy lights of the April heaven.
From eaves and leaves the quivering dew
Sparkled off; and the rich earth, black and bare,
Was starr'd with snow-drops everywhere,
And the crocus upturn'd its flame, and burn'd
Here and there.
"The Summer," she said, "cometh blithe and bold;
And the crocus is lit for her welcoming;
And the days will have garments of purple and gold;
But I would be left by the pale green Spring
With the snow-drops somewhere under the mould;
For I dare not think what the Summer may bring."

VI.

Pale she was as the bramble blooms
That fill the long fields with their faint perfumes,
When the May-wind flits finely through sun-threaded
showers,
Breathing low to himself in his dim meadow-bowers.
And her cheek each year was paler and thinner,
And white as the pearl that was hung at her ear,
As her sad heart sicken'd and pined within her,
And fail'd and fainted from year to year.
So that the Seneschal, rough and gray,

Said, as he look'd in her face one day,
 " St. Catherine save all good souls I pray,
 For the sweetest Christian soul, I ween,
 Day by day is dying away
 In the saddest eyes were ever seen.
 O the Saints," he said, smiling bitter and grim,
 " Know she's too fair and too good for him !"

VII.

Sometimes she walk'd on the upper leads,
 And lean'd on the arm of the weather-worn Warden :
 Sometimes she sat 'twixt the mildewy beds
 Of the sea-singed flowers in the Pleasaunce Garden ;
 Till the rotting blooms that lay thick on the walks
 Were comb'd by the white sea-gust like a rake,
 And the stimulant steam of the leaves and stalks
 Made the coilèd Memory, numb and cold,
 That slept in her heart like a dreaming snake,
 Drowsily lift himself fold by fold,
 And gnaw and gnaw hungrily, half-awake.

VIII.

Sometimes she look'd from the window below
 To the great South Court, and the squires, at their
 sport,
 Loungingly loitering to and fro.
 She heard the grooms there as they cursed one an-
 other.
 She heard the great bowls falling all day long
 In the bowling alleys. She heard the song
 Of the shock-headed Pages that drank without stint in
 The echoing courts, and swore hard at each other.
 She saw the red face of the rough wooden Quintin,
 And the swinging sand-bag ready to smother

The awkward Squire that miss'd the mark.
And, all day long, between the dull noises
Of the bowls, and the oaths, and the singing voices,
The sea boom'd hoarse till the skies were dark.

IX.

But when the swallow, that sweet new-comer,
Floated over the sea in the front of the Summer,
The salt dry sands burn'd white, and sicken'd
Men's sight in the glaring horn of the bay;
And all things that fasten, or float at ease
In the silvery light of the leprous seas
With the pulse of a hideous life were quicken'd,
Fell loose from the rocks, and crawl'd crosswise away.
Slippery sidelong crabs, half strangled
By the white sea-grasses in which they were tangled,
And those half-living creatures, orb'd, ray'd, and
sharp-angled,
Fan-fish, and star-fish, and polypous lumps,
Hueless and boneless, that languidly thicken'd,
Or flat-faced, or spikèd, or ridgèd with humps,
Melting off from their clotted clusters and clumps,
Sprawl'd over the shore in the heat of the day.

X.

An hour before the sun was set
A darker ripple roll'd over the sea;
The white rocks quiver'd in wells of jet;
And the great West, opening breathlessly
Up all his inmost orange, gave
Hints of something distant and sweet
That made her heart swell; far up the wave

The clouds that lay piled in the golden heat
Were turn'd into types of the ancient mountains
In an ancient land ; the weeds, which forlorn
Waves were swaying neglectfully,
By their sound, as they dipp'd into sparkles that
 dripp'd
In the emerald creeks that ran up from the shore,
Brought back to her fancy the bubble of fountains
Leaping and falling continually
In valleys where she should wander no more.

XI.

And when, over all of these, the night
Of the great Midsummer, strong, measureless, bright,
Benignant and beauteous, from height over height,
With depth within depth of a passion divine
Burst into blossom of stars and light,
And the far beacon cliffs were beginning to shine,
The sea was glassy ; the glassy brine
Was paven with purple and crystalline,
But broken, and dimpled, and sportively riven,
Dash'd into, and danc'd through and through, by
 swift-driven
Soft-wandering gleams from light footsteps flung
Of unseen sea-fairies the rocks among ;
While about it, above it, and bathing it all,
Like a great heart grieving in Beauty's thrall,
The bounteous Darkness heavily hung
Balanced under the buoyant moon, and slung,
With no scope for escape, athwart foreland and cape,
In a net of silver sparkles. Then she
Rippled her yellow hair to her knee,

Bared her warm white bosom and throat,
And from the lattice lean'd athirst.
There, on the silence did she gloat
With a dizzy pleasure steep'd in pain,
Half catching the soul of the secret that blended
God with His starlight, then feeling it vain,
Like a pining poet ready to burst
With the weight of the wonder that grows in his brain,
Or a nightingale, mute at the sound of a lute
That is swelling and breaking his heart with its strain,
Waiting, breathless, to die when the music is ended.
For the sleek and beautiful Midnight stole,
Like a faithless friend, her secret care,
Crept through each pore to the source of the soul,
And mock'd at the anguish which he found there,
Shining away from her, scornful and fair
In his pitiless beauty, refusing to share
The discontent which he could not control.

XII.

Thus full many a night,
Steep'd pale in the light
Of the stars, when the bells and clocks
Had ceased in the towers,
And the sound of the hours
Was eddying about in the rocks,
Deep-sunken in bristling broidery
Between the black oak Fiends sat she,
And under the moth-flitted canopy
Of the mighty antique bed in her chamber,
With wild eyes drinking up the sea,
And her white hands heavy with jewelry,

Flashing as she loosed languidly
Her satins of snow and of amber.
And as, fold by fold, these were rippled and roll'd
To her feet, and lay huddled in ruins of gold,
She look'd like some pale spirit above
Earth's dazzling passions for ever flung by,
Freed from the stains of an earthly love,
And those splendid shackles of pride that press
On the heart till it aches with the gorgeous stress,
Quitting the base Past remorsefully.
And so she put by the coil and care
Of the day that lay furl'd like an idle weft
Of heapèd spots which a bright snake hath left,
Or that dark house, the blind worm's lair,
When the star-wingèd moth from the windows hath
 crept,
Steep'd her soul in a tearful prayer,
Shrank into her naked self, and slept.

XIII.

And as she slumber'd, starr'd and eyed
All over with angry gems, at her side,
The Fiends in the oak kept ward and watch ;
And the querulous clock, on its rusty catch,
With a quick tick, husky and thick,
Clamour'd and clack'd at her sharply.

There was

(Fronting a portrait of the Earl)
A shrine with a dim green lamp, and a cross
Of glowing cedar wreath'd with pearl,
Which the Arimathæan, so it was writ,
When he came from the holy Orient,

•
Had worn, by his prayers embalming it,
As with the San-Grael through the world he went.
Underneath were relics and gems
From many an antique king-saint's crown,
And some ('twas avouch'd) from the dusk diadems
And mighty rings of those Wise Kings
That evermore sleep 'mid the marble stems,
'Twixt chancel and chalice in God His palace,
The marvel of Cologne Town.
In a halo dim of the lamp all night
Smiled the sad Virgin, holy and white,
With a face as full of the soul's affliction
As one that had look'd on the Crucifixion.

XIV.

At moon-rise the land was suddenly brighter ;
And through all its length and breadth the casement
Grew large with a luminous strange amazement ;
And, as doubting in dreams what that sudden blaze
 meant,
The Lady's white face turn'd a thought wider.

XV.

Sometimes in sleep light finger-tips
Touch'd her behind ; the pain, the bliss
Of a long slow despairing kiss
Doubled the heat on her feverish lips,
And down to her heart's heart smouldering burn'd ;
From lips long mute she heard her name :
Sad dreams and sweet to vex her came ;
Sighing, upon her pillow she turn'd,
Like a weary waif on a weary sea
That is heaving over continually,

And finds no course, until for its sake
The heart of the silence begins to ache.
Unsooth'd from slumber she awoke
An hour ere dawn. The lamp burn'd faint.
The Fiends glared at her out of the oak.
She rose, and fell at the shrine of the Saint.
There, with claspèd hands to the Mother
Of many sorrows, in sorrow, she pray'd ;
Till all things in the room melted into each other,
And vanish'd in gyres of flickering shade,
Leaving her all alone, with the face
Of the Saint growing large in its one bright place.
Then on a sudden, from far, a fear
Through all her heart its horror drew,
As of something hideous growing near.
Cold fingers seem'd roaming through her damp hair.
Her lips were lock'd. The power of prayer
Left her. She dared not turn. She knew,
From his panel atilt on the wall up there,
The grim Earl was gazing her through and through.

XVI.

And the Summer into the Autumn waned.
And under the watery Hyades
The gray sea swell'd, and the thick sky rain'd
And the land was darken'd by slow degrees.

XVII.

But oft, in the low West, the day,
Smouldering, sent up a sullen flame
Along the dreary waste of gray,
As though in that red region lay,

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Heap'd up, like Autumn weeds and flowers
For fire, its thorny, fruitless hours,
And God said, "Burn it all away!"

XVIII.

When all was dreariest in the skies,
And the gusty tract of twilight mutter'd,
A strange slow smile grew into her eyes,
As though from a great way off it came
And was weary ere down to her lips it flutter'd,
And turn'd into a sigh, or some soft name
Whose syllables sounded likest sighs,
Half-smother'd in sorrow before they were utter'd.

XIX.

Sometimes, at night, a music was roll'd—
A ripple of silver harp-strings cold—
From the halls below where the Minstrel sung,
With the silver hair, and the golden tongue,
And the eyes of passionless, peaceful blue
(Like twilight which faint stars gaze through),
Wise with the years which no man knew.
And first the music, as though the wings
Of some blind angel were caught in the strings,
Flutter'd with weak endeavour: anon
The uncaged heart of music grew bold
And cautiously loosen'd, length by length,
The golden cone of its great under-tone,
Like a strong man using mild language to one
That is weaker, because he is sure of his strength.

XX.

But once—and it was at the fall of the day,
When she, if she closed her eyes, did seem
To be wandering far, in a sort of dream,
With some lost shadow, away, away,
Down the heart of a golden land which she
Remember'd a great way over the sea,
There came a trample of horses and men ;
And a blowing of horns at the Castle-Gate :
Then a clattering noise ; then a pause ; and then,
With the sudden jerk of a heavy weight,
And a wrangling and jangling and clinking and
clanking,
The sound of the falling of cable and chain ;
And a grumbling over the dewy planking
That shriek'd and sung with the weight and strain.
And the rough Seneschal bawl'd out in the hall,
“The Earl and the Devil are come back again !”

XXI.

Her heart stood still for a moment or more.
Then suddenly tugg'd, and strain'd, and tore
At the roots, which seem'd to give way beneath.
She rush'd to the window, and held her breath.
High up on the beach where the long black ships :
And the brown sails hung from the masts in strips ;
And the surf was whirl'd over and over them,
And swept them dripping from stern to stem.
Within, in the great square court below,
Were a hundred rough-faced men, or so,
And one or two pale-hair'd slaves
Which the Earl had brought over the winter waves.

•
XXII.

There was a wringing of horny hands ;
And a swearing of oaths ; and a great deal of laughter ;
The grim Earl growling his hoarse commands
To the Warden that follow'd him growling after ;
A lowing of cattle along the wet sands ;
And a plashing of hoofs on the slippery rafter,
As the long-tail'd black-maned horses each
Went over the bridge from the gray sea-beach.

XXIII.

Meanwhile the pale Lady grew whiter and whiter,
As the poplar pales when the keen winds smite her :
And, as the tree sways to the gust, and heaves
Quick ripples of white alarm up the leaves,
So did she shudder and shrink and reel
At the casement—one quiver from head to heel
Of whitest fear. For she heard below,
On the creaking stairway loud and slow,
Like drops that plunge audibly down from the thunder
Into a sea that is groaning under,
The heavy foot of the Earl as he mounted
Step after step to the turret : she counted
Step after step, as he hasten'd or halted ;
Now clashing shrill through the archways vaulted ;
Now muffled and thick ; now loud, and more
Loud as he came near the chamber door.
Then there fell, with a rattle and shock,
An iron glove on the iron lock,
And the door burst open—the Earl burst through it—
But she saw him not. The window-pane,
Far off, grew large and small again ;

The staggering light did wax and wane,
As, when through windy mist you view it,
Moonlight mix'd with shadowy rain ;
Till there came a snap of the heavy brain ;
And a slow-subsiding pulse of pain ;
And, to her, life darken'd into rest,
As the grim Earl press'd to his unloved breast
The dead face of the woman that he loved best.

XXIV.

*"The Woman was fairer than she was wise :
But the Serpent was wiser than she was fair :
For the Serpent was lord in Paradise
Or ever the Woman came there.
But when Eden-gates were barr'd amain,
And the fiery sword on guard in the East,
The lion arose from a long repose,
And, quoth he, as he shook out his royal mane,
'Now I am the strongest beast.'
Had the Woman been wiser when she was queen
The Lion had never been king, I ween.
But ever since storms began to lower
Beauty on earth has been second to Power."
And this is the song that the Minstrel sung,
With the silver hair and the golden tongue,
Who sung by night in the grim Earl's hall.
And they held him in reverence one and all.*

XXV.

But the Earl he bade them lift her lightly,
And bury her by the gray sea-shore,

Where the winds that blew from her own land nightly
Might wail round her grave through the wild rocks
hoar.

So they lifted her lightly at dead of night,
And bore her down by the long torch-light—
Bore her down to the bleak thorn tree
That, in midst of the loneliness, lean
And pining, and pinch'd with pain
(A blighted life, as her own had been),
Stood, turning sick arms away
From the dark and desolate sea,
Back on the barren shore,
As who, in his heart, should say,
'I have watch'd and waited in vain,
No more, O never more,
Shall bloom, bruised heart, for thee
The beauty that was of yore
And never again can be.'
Thus sullenly, four by four
(While the stragglers hoarsely talking
Follow'd by two and by three),
The black pall-bearers bore
Their dead weight grimly stalking.
Lank-hair'd faces, sallow and keen,
That burn'd out of the glassy pools between
The splashing sands which, as they plunged through
The coffin-lead weigh'd them down into ;
And their feet, as they pluck'd them up, left pits
Which the water oozed into and out of by fits—
—And so to the deep-mouth'd bay's black brim,
Where the pale priests, all white-stoled and dim,
Lifted the cross and chaunted the hymn,

That her soul might have peace when her bones
were dust,
And her name be written among the Just.
The Warden walk'd after the Seneschal grim ;
And the shock-headed Pages walk'd after him :
And with mattock and spade a grave was made,
Where they carved the cross, and they wrote her name,
And, returning each by the way that he came,
Their task being o'er, in a month or more,
By night in the hall, and by day on the shore,
With never a thought of their buried dame,
And no heart of them sore for the days of yore,
They laugh'd and quaff'd, and quarell'd and swore,
And all things became again the same
As all things had been before.

XXVI.

And again the swallow, that false new-comer,
Flutter'd over the sea in the front of the Summer :
A careless singer, as he should be
That only skimmeth the mighty sea ;
Dipp'd his wings as he came and went,
And chirrup'd and twitter'd for heart's content,
And built on the new-made grave. But when
The Summer was over he flew back again.
And the flowers decay'd in their dismal beds,
And dropp'd off from their lean shanks one by one,
Till nothing was left but the stalks and the heads,
Clump'd into heaps, or ripp'd into shreds,
To steam into salt in the sickly sun.
And the cattle low'd late up the glimmering plain,
Or dipp'd knee-deep, and splash'd themselves

In the pools spat out by the spiteful main,
Wallowing in sandy dykes and delves :
And the blear-eyed filmy sea did boom
With his old mysterious hungering sound :
And the wet wind wail'd in the chinks of the tomb,
Till the weeds in the surf were drench'd and drown'd.
And the Earl, as years went by, and his life
Grew listless, took him another wife.
But once a stranger came over the wave,
And paused by the pale-faced Lady's grave.

XXVII.

It was when, just about to set,
A sadness held the sinking sun.
The moon was a mere white mist as yet
In the bland abundant blue :
The Ave-Mary chime was done ;
The grey-gown'd priest was passèd through
The chapel porch of grassy stone ;
And from the bell-tower lean'd the ringers ;
And in the chancel paused the singers,
With lingering looks, and claspèd fingers :
And the day reluctantly turn'd to his rest,
Like some untold life, that leaves express
But the half of its hungering love ere it close :
So he went sadly toward his repose
Deep in the heart of the slumbrous waves
Kindled far off in the desolate West.
And the breeze sprang up in the cool sea-caves.
The castle stood with his courts in shade,
And all his toothèd towers imprest
On the sorrowful light that sunset made—

Such a light as sleeps shut up in the breast
Of some pining crimson-hearted rose,
Which, as you gaze at it, grows and grows
And all the warm leaves overflows ;
Leaving its sweet source still to be guest.

XXVIII.

Ere the moon was abroad, the owl
Made himself heard in the echoing tower
Three times, four times. The bat with her cowl
Came and went round the lonely Bower
Where dwelt of yore the Earl's lost Lady.
There night after night, for years, in vain
The lingering moon had look'd through the pane,
And miss'd the face she used to find there,
White and wan like some mountain flower
In its rocky nook, as it paled and pined there
Only known to the moon and the wind there.
Lights flitted faint in the halls down lower
From lattice to lattice, and then glow'd steady.

XXIX.

The dipping gull : and the long gray pool :
And the reed that shows which way the breeze
 blows cool,
From the wide warm sea to the low black land :
And the wave makes no sound on the soft yellow
 sand :
But the inland shallows sharp and small
Are swarm'd about with the sultry midge :
And the land is still, and the ocean still

And the weeds[•] in the rifted rocks at will
Move on the tide, and sink or slide.
And into the silent western side
Of the heaven the moon begins to fall.
But is it the fall of a plover's call
That is answer'd warily, low yet shrill,
From the sand-heapt mound and the rocky ridge?
And now o'er the dark plain so wild and wide
Falls the note of a horn from the old draw-bridge.

XXX.

Who is it that waits at the castle-gates?
Call in the minstrel, and fill the bowl.
Bid him loose the great music and let the song roll.
Fill the bowl.
And first, as was due, to the Earl he bow'd:
Next to all the Sea-chieftains, blithe friends of the
 Earl's:
Then advanced through the praise of the murmuring
 crowd,
And sat down, as they bade him, and all his black
 curls
Bow'd o'er his harp, as in doubt which to choose
From the melodies coil'd at his heart. For a man
O'er some Beauty asleep for one moment might muse,
Half in love, ere he woke her. So ere he began,
He paused over his song. And they brought him,
 the Squires,
A heavy gold cup with the red wine ripe in it,
Then wave over wave of the sweet silver wires
'Gan ripple, and the minstrel took heart to begin it.

XXXI.

A harper that harps through mountain and glen,
Wandering, wandering the wide world over,
Sweetest of singers, yet saddest of men,
His soul's lost Lady in vain to discover,
What shall he liken his love unto?
Have you seen some cloud the sun sets through,
When the lingering night is close at hand?
Have you seen some rose lie on the snow?
Or a summer bird in a winter land?
Or a lily dying for dearth of dew?
Some garden never sunshine warms
Nor any tend? some lonely tree
That stretches bleak its barren arms
Turn'd inland from the blighting sea?
Her cheek was pale : her face was fair :
Her heart, he sung, was weak and warm :
All golden was the sleepy hair
That floated round about her form,
And hid the sweetness breathing there.
Her eyes were wild, like stars that shine
Far off in summer nights divine :
But her smile—it was like the golden wine
Pour'd into the spirit, as into a cup,
With passion brimming it up, and up,
And marvellous fancies fair and fine.
He took her hair to make sweet strings :
He hid her smile deep in his song.
This makes so rich the tune he sings
That o'er the world 'twill linger long.

XXXII.

There is a land far, far away from yours.
And there the stars are thrice as bright as these.
And there the nightingale strange music pours
All day out of the hearts of myrtle trees.
There the voice of the cuckoo sounds never forlorn
As you hear it far off thro' the deep purple valleys.
And the firefly dances by night in the corn.
And the little round owls in the long cypress alleys
Whoop for joy when the moon is born.
There ripen the olive and the tulip tree.
And in the sun broadens the green prickly pear.
And the bright galingales in the grass you may see.
And the vine, with her royal blue globes, dwelleth
there,
Climbing and hanging deliciously
By every doorway and lone latticed chamber,
Where the damselfly flits, and the heavy brown bee
Hums alone, and the quick lizards rustle and clamber.
And all things, there, live and rejoice together,
From the frail peach-blossom that first appears
When birds are about in the blue summer weather,
To the oak that has lived through his eight hundred
years.
And the castles are built on the hills, not the plains.
(And the wild windflowers burn about in the courts
there)
They are white and undrench'd by the gray winter
rains.
And the swallows, and all things, are blithe at their
sports there.

O for one moment, at sunset, to stand
Far, far away, in that dear distant land
Whence they bore her—the loveliest lady that ever
Crossed the bleak ocean. Oh nevermore, never,
Shall she stand with her feet in the warm dry grasses
Where the faint balm-heaping breeze heavily passes,
And the white lotus-flower leans lone on the river !

XXXIII.

Rare were the gems which she had for her dower.
But all the wild flowers she left behind her.
—A broken heart and a rose-roof'd bower.
O oft, and in many a desolate hour,
The cold strange faces she sees shall remind her
Of hearts that were warmer, and smiles that were
 kinder,
Lost like the roses they pluck'd from her bower !
Lonely and far from her own land they laid her !
—A swallow flew over the sea to find her.
Ah cold, cold and narrow, the bed that they made
 her !
The swallow went forth with the summer to find her.
The summer and the swallow came back o'er the sea,
And strange were the tidings the bird brought to me.

XXXIV.

And the minstrel sung, and they praised and listen'd—
Gazed and praised while the minstrel sung.
Flusht was each cheek, and each fixt eye glisten'd,
And husht was each voice to the minstrel's tongue.
But the Earl grew paler more and more
As the song of the Singer grew louder and clearer,

And so dumb was the hall, you might hear the roar
Of the sea in its pauses grow nearer and drearer.
And . . . hush ! hush ! hush !
O was it the wind ? or was it the rush
Of the restless waters that tumble and splash
On the wild sea-rocks ? or was it the crash
Of stones on the old wet bridge up there ?
Or the sound of the tempest come over the main ?
—Nay, but just now the night was fair.
Was it the march of the midnight rain
Clattering down in the courts ? or the crash
Of armour yonder ? . . . Listen again !

XXXV.

Can it be lightning ?—can it be thunder ?
For a light is all round the lurid hall
That reddens and reddens the windows all,
And far away you may hear the fall
As of rafter and boulder splitting asunder.
It is not the thunder, and it is not the lightning,
To which the castle is sounding and brightening,
But something worse than lightning or thunder ;
For what is this that is coming yonder ?

XXXVI.

Which way ? Here ! Where ?
Call the men ! . . . Is it there ?
Call them out ! Ring the bell !
Ring the Fiend back to Hell !
Ring, ring the alarm for mercy ! . . . Too late !
It has crawl'd up the walls—it has burst in the gate—

It looks thro' the windows—it creeps near the hall—
Near, more near—red and clear—
It is here !
Now the saints save us all !

XXXVII.

And little, in truth, boots it ringing the bell.
For the fire is loose on its way one may tell
By the hot simmering whispers and humming up there
In the oak-beams and rafters. Now one of the Squires
His elbow hath thrust thro' the half-smoulder'd door—
Such a hole as some rat for his brown wife might bore—
And straightway in snaky, white, wavering spires
The thin smoke twirls thro', and spreads eddying in
gyres
Here and there toucht with vanishing tints from the
glare
That has swathed in its rose-light the sharp turret
stair.
Soon the door ruin'd thro': and in tumbled a cloud
Of black vapour. And first 'twas all blackness, and
then
The quick fork'd fires leapt out from their shroud
In the blackness: and thro' it rush'd in the arm'd men
From the courtyard. And then there was flying and
fighting,
And praying and cursing—confusion confounded.
Each man, at wild hazard, thro' smoke ramparts
smiting,
Has struck . . . is it friend? is it foe? Who is
wounded?

XXXVIII.

But the Earl—who last saw him? Who cares? who
knows?

Some one, no doubt, by the weight of his blows.
And they all, at times, heard his oath—so they
swore:—

Such a cry as some spear'd wild beast might give
vent to,

When the lean dogs are on him, and forth with that
roar

Of desolate wrath, the life is sent too.

If he die, he will die with the dying about him,
And his red wet sword in his hand, never doubt him:

If he live, perchance he will bear his new bride
Thro' them all, past the bridge, to the wild sea-side.
And there, whether he leave, or keep his wife still,
'There's the free sea round him, new lands, and new
life still.

And . . . but ah, the red light there! And high up
and higher

The soft, warm, vivid sparkles crowd kindling, and
wander

Far away down the breathless blue cone of the night.

Saints! can it be that the ships are on fire,

Those fierce hot clots of crimson light,

Brightening, whitening in the distance yonder?

Slowly over the slumbrous dark

Up from those fountains of fire spark on spark

(You might count them almost) floats silent: and clear

In the steadfast glow the great cross beams,

And the sharp and delicate masts show black ;
While wider and higher the red light streams,
And oozes, and overflows at the back.
Then faint thro' the distance a sound you hear,
And the bare poles totter and disappear.

XXXIX.

Of the Earl, in truth, the Seneschal swore
(And over the ocean this tale he bore)
That when, as he fled on that last wild night,
He had gain'd the other side of the moat,
Dripping, he shook off his wet leathern coat,
And turning round beheld, from basement
To cope, the castle swathed in light,
And, reveal'd in the glare thro' My Lady's casement,
He saw, or dreamed he saw, this sight—

XL.

Two forms (and one for the Earl's he knew,
By the long shaggy beard and the broad back too)
Struggling, grappling, like things half human.
The other, he said, he but vaguely distinguish'd,
When a sound like the shriek of an agonized woman
Made him shudder, and lo, all the vision was gone !
Ceiling and floor had fallen thro',
In a glut of vomited flame extinguish'd ;
And the still fire rose and broaden'd on.

XLI.

How fearful a thing is fire !
You might make up your mind to die by water
A slow, cool death—nay, at times, when weary
Of pains that pass not, and pleasures that pall,

When the temples throb, and the heart is dreary,
And life is dried up, you could even desire
Thro' the flat green weeds to fall and fall
Half asleep down the green light, under them all,
As in a dream, while all things seem
Wavering, wavering, to feel the stream
Wind, and gurgle, and sound, and gleam.
And who would very much fear to expire
By steel, in the front of victorious slaughter,
The blithe battle about him, and comrades in call?
But to die by fire!
O that night in the hall!

XLII.

And the castle burn'd from base to top.
You had thought that the fire would never stop,
For it roar'd like the great north wind in the pines,
And shone as the boreal meteor shines
Watch'd by wild hunters in shuddering bands,
When wolves are about in the icy lands.
From the sea you might mark for a space of three
days,
Or fainter, or fiercer, the dull red blaze.
And when this ceased, the smoke above it
Hung so heavy not even the wind seemed to move it.
So it glared and groan'd, and night after night
Smoulder'd—a terrible beacon-light.

XLIII.

Now the Earl's old minstrel—he that had sung
His youth out in those halls—the man beloved,
With the silver hair and the golden tongue,
They bore him out from the fire; but he roved

Back to the stifled courts ; and there
They watch'd him hovering, day after day,
To and fro', with his long white hair
And his gold harp, chaunting a lonely lay :
Chaunting and changing it o'er and o'er,
Like the mournful, mad, melodious breath
Of some wild swan singing himself to death,
As he floats down a strange land leagues away.
One day the song ceased. They heard it no more.

XLIV.

Did you ever an Alpine eagle see
Come down from flying near the sun
To find his eyrie all undone
On lonely cliffs, where chance hath led
Some spying thief the brood to plunder?
How hangs he desolate overhead,
And circling now aloft, now under,
His ruin'd home, screams round and round,
Then drops flat fluttering to the ground.
So moaning round the roofs they saw him,
With his gleaming harp, and his vesture white :
Going, and coming, and ever returning
To those chambers, emptied of beauty and state,
And choked with blackness and ruin and burning ;
Then, as some instinct seemed to draw him,
Like hidden hands, down to his fate,
He paused, plunged, dropp'd for ever from sight ;
And a cone of smoke and sparkles rolled up,
As out of some troubled crater-cup.

XLV.

As for the rest, some died ; some fled
Over the sea, nor ever return'd.
But until to the living return the dead,
And they each shall stand and take their station
Again at the last great conflagration,
Never more will be seen the Earl or the stranger.
No doubt there is much here that's fit to be burn'd.
Christ save us all in that day from the danger !

THE END.

